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THE

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LIVES

of the

MOST EMINENT LITERARY

AND

SCIENTIFIC MEN

OF

GREAT BRITAIN

VOL. II.



The Church Stratford-upon-Avon.

TO THE READER.

It was intended to make each volume of the biographical department of the *Cabinet Cyclopædia* as miscellaneous as possible. In the present volume, however, there is a deviation from that intention. It is, as the reader will perceive, entirely devoted to our old dramatic literature. Taken in connection with the Life of *John Heywood* in the preceding volume, it exhibits a consecutive and, we hope, comprehensive view of the subject, from the origin of theatrical representation in England to the middle of the seventeenth century.

As the period in question, viz. from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, is less known to the general reader than the subsequent one, viz. from the middle of the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, we have been much more diffuse than we can be hereafter. In the future volumes we cannot find space for the Lives of many dramatists. We will, however, connect the parts of the subject by such observations on the state of dramatic literature, between the periods in which those writers lived, as to leave nothing wanting towards a *general* knowledge of the English stage, from the most distant antiquity to the present century.

After perusing the present volume, the reader may possibly inquire why we have omitted all notice of *Shirley*, who is generally esteemed the last of our great dramatists. For this omission we have two reasons. The first is, that in following the stream of time we are not yet descended to the year in which he died. The second is, that we consider him rather the first of a

new than the last of an old race. He is the first link in a chain of which Otway and Dryden, and Wycherley and Congreve, are, after him, the most important.

Another circumstance may strike the reader, — that in both the volumes the extracts are copious. They are, indeed, more copious than we intended, — more so by far than we shall admit in the subsequent volumes. It must, however, be observed, that in the former volumes three fourths of the extracts taken were not from printed books, but from MSS., some of great rarity; and that though in the present volume they are chiefly from books, those sources are too numerous and expensive to be accessible to any other than the persevering student who has time and wealth at his command. Even to him, however, the former volume contains much that is novel; and if the present be in this respect less valuable, it has the merit, at least, of concentrating the rays of light which are scattered throughout the horizon of our early drama. These, it may be said, are pearls which any reader may find. So he may, if he have the leisure, the industry, the perseverance to seek for them. But he who has the greatest share of these advantages will often be discouraged in the search. He may dig many long days before he discovers any thing worth the trouble of picking up. Our ancient drama is, indeed, a rich mine; but the dross outweighs the ore, in the proportion of at least a thousand to one. To drop metaphor, — not one reader in a thousand could, without the help of such epitomes as the present, know any thing of our ancient literature, especially of our dramatic literature.

We have only to add, that the Lives in these two volumes are not the production of the same pen.

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LIVE



EMINENT

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFI EN.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR;

(1564—1616)

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE CONTINUED. *

1. *The Stage immediately prior to Shakespear.*

In this place it may perhaps be necessary to remind the reader that in the present, as in most of the Lives in this collection, our business is with the *subject* rather than the *man*. Thus St. Columba was chosen, that some account might be given of the introduction of Christianity into North Britain; Alfred, that the state of English civilisation in the ninth century might be described; John Heywood, that the origin and early history of our stage might be traced from the first rude attempts at miracle plays, to the time of that witty dramatist. For a similar reason, viz. that the early history of our stage may be completed, and the subject

* See Vol. I. Life of John Heywood.

brought down to a period with which all are familiar, we have selected the name of the immortal Shakespear.

1. The next dramatist who followed, "merry John Heywood,"—the next, we mean, whose name deserves even a passing mention,—was *Richard Edwards*, born in 1523, died in 1566.* He was a native of Somersetshire, and was educated at Oxford. Of his life, however, so little is known, that it might be comprised in half a dozen lines; and our observations must relate almost wholly to his writings. He appears, at an early age, to have excelled in music and poetry, (we use the term *excellence* in reference to the opinion of his contemporaries, and to the then state of the sister arts) and from these attainments he was made welcome at court. At what period he became connected with the royal establishment, we know not; but it was probably towards the close of the eighth Henry's reign. Equal obscurity rests on the capacity in which he served at court, prior to the reign of Elizabeth: *then* he was one of the gentlemen of the chapel royal, and master of the singing boys; and his previous occupation had probably been a kindred one. These boys were not merely *singers:* they were also *actors* (at least, occasionally) for the amusement of the court; but whether they filled the character of *men* may be doubted. As *women* were not permitted on the stage before the seventeenth century, *their* parts were probably represented by these boys. How far Edwards succeeded in his twofold character as singer and player, we need not enquire: we know only that he died at court in the vigour of manhood.

Edwards is the author of two dramas which have descended to posterity, and in all probability of others which have perished. His first known production, *Damon and Pythias*, appears to have been acted in

* To avoid the necessity of perpetually citing authorities, we may observe that the materials for the life and writings of Richard Edwards are derived from Wood, Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss; from Dodsley's Old Plays, (last edition) vol. i.; from Baker, Biographia Dramatica; from Payne Collier, History of Dramatic Poetry; from the Paradise of Dainty Devices, (by Brydges, edit. 1810); from Campbell, Specimens of English Poetry; and a few other new pieces of less moment.

1564, but it it had probably been composed long before. Both with queen and nobles, with court and university, it was evidently a favourite: the reason is, that the regular drama was in its infancy when good taste was not to be expected; when dulness was mistaken for gravity, and conceit for genius. Another performance, *Palemon and Arcyte,* which was made to entertain Elizabeth, at Christ Church, Oxford, about two months before the author's death, was still more admired. When the performance was concluded, she sent for him, spoke warmly of the gratification which the piece had given her, and promised him more substantial marks of her favour. To a boy who acted the part of *Emilia,* she gave eight guineas, no inconsiderable sum in those days, and wonderfully large in one of her penurious disposition. But the only merit of this drama lay in the acting: a cry of hounds, in particular, in the quadrangle of the college, highly delighted the young students, who believed that the human voice imitating the cry was a real chase actually passing at the time, and who could not avoid exclaiming, in regard to the supposed fox, "There, there, he's caught!" Gratified with the power of the illusion, the queen observed, "Excellent!" these boys, in very truth, are ready to leap out of the windows to follow the hounds!"

The latter of these dramas, *Palemon and Arcyte,* we have not seen; but *Damon and Pythias* is before us: and if we may estimate the author's pieces from it, we have little reason to regret the loss of his other compositions. "The serious portions," observes a living writer, "are unvaried and heavy; and the lighter scenes grotesque, without being humorous." All kinds of dramatic propriety are disregarded; and among other absurdities, the author has placed the collier of Croydon at the court of Dionysius, where we have some very coarse dialogues between him and a couple of lackeys, *Jack* and *Will.* Such monstrosities, however, are not

peculiar to Edwards: they were the fault of the age. But these are not the greatest deformities of the piece: the personages swear by the Virgin Mary, and by the Holy Rood; modern French is quoted by a collier of Croydon; there is mention of "merry pope John," and a hundred other absurdities which we will not particularise. Were there any beauties of sentiment or of diction, any strength of language or of passion, to counterbalance them, we might overlook the one for the sake of the other; but throughout the whole drama, we cannot find a single passage likely to interest the reader.

But if Edwards be thus contemptible as a dramatist, he is not wholly so as a descriptive poet. Take for instance his verses on MAY, which, though very laboured and very affected, display something like fancy:—

"When May is in his prime, then may each heart rejoice,
When May bedecks each branch with green, each bird strains forth his voice.
The lively sap creeps up into the blooming thorn,
The flowers which cold in prison kept, now laugh the frost to scorn;
All nature's imps triumph while joyful May doth last,
When May is gone, of all the year the pleasant time is past.

"May makes the cheerful sure, May breeds and brings new blood;
May marcheth throughout every limb, May makes the merry mood!
May pricketh tender hearts their warbling notes to tune;
Full strange it is, yet some, we see, do make their May in June.
Thus things are strangely wrought, while joyful May doth last:
Take May in time, — when May is gone, the pleasant time is past.

"All ye that live on earth, and have your May at will,
Rejoice in May as I do now, and use your May with skill.
Use May while that you may, for May has but his time,
When all the fruit is gone it is too late the tree to climb."

* Paradise of Dainty Devices.

But even in this species of poetry, it was impossible for Edwards to escape the affectation of the period; its laboured conceits and puerile alliteration. Thus, in other stanzas on the same subject, while describing the joy of animated nature at the return of the season, he laments, in strange terms, his own unsuccessful courtship:—

"In May the kind dame nature wills all earthly wights to
sing;
In May the new and coupled fowls may joy the lively spring;
In May the nightingale her notes doth warble in the spray;
In May the birds their mossy nests do timber as they may;
In May the swiftly turning hart her bagged belly shakes;
In May the little sucking things do play with tender flax:
All creatures may in May be glad,—no May can we remove,
I sorrow in May, since I may not in May obtain my love.

"The stately hart in May doth mue* his old and palmy beams,
His state renews in May, he leaps to view Apollo's streams;
In May the buck his horned tips doth hang upon the pale;
In May he seeks the pastures green in ranging o'er the dale;
In May the ugly speckled snake doth cast her loathsome skin,
In May, the better that he may increase the scaly kin.
All things in May I see they may rejoice,—like turtle dove
I sorrow in May, since I may not in May obtain my love."†

2. Connected with the dramatic history of this period are two productions, which, though the authors survived the end of the sixteenth century, ought slightly to be noticed here. The first, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, was probably written by Dr. John Still, who died bishop of Bath and Wells in 1607. As, however, we have no more than evidence merely presumptive that he was the writer, we will not enter into the details of his life; sufficient for our purpose is it to know, that this drama, by whomsoever written, appeared in the early part of Elizabeth's reign. It has, indeed, been called the first comedy in our language; it was, however, long preceded by the Four P.'s of John Heywood. Perhaps

* Mue, change.
† Paradise of Dainty Devices.

no more is meant than that it was the first of our comedies *represented* in public; but probably this too is a mistake; for though we have no evidence for the representation of the Four P.'s, we have for that of *Ralph Roister Doister*; the honour, such as it is, must accordingly be awarded to this latter comedy. As an analysis of this piece—which to us has no charms—is to be found in a work of easy access *, we will not dwell on it, but confine our attention to Gammer Gurton's Needle †; but even of this, we must in justice say, its antiquity is its chief claim to our notice. If superior, as it undoubtedly is, to *Ralph Roister Doister*, it assuredly does not deserve the praise of Hawkins, its first publisher, that it contains "a vein of familiar humour, and a kind of grotesque imagery, not unlike some parts of Aristophanes." There is something extremely absurd in thus combining the verses of two writers, whom genius, no less than time, has placed at an unmeasurable distance asunder. As if ashamed of the comparison, the same editor admits that the comedy in question is "without those graces of language and metre for which the Greek dramatist was so much distinguished." *Gammer Gurton's Needle* compared with *The Knights* or *The Clouds!* This is indeed Alexander the coppersmith to Alexander the Great! ‡

The plot of the English comedy (which was first printed in 1565) relates to the loss of a needle while the Gammer was sewing the inexpressibles of her servant *Hodge*; to her anxiety for its recovery; to her suspicion of its having been stolen by a neighbbour; to her consequent intrigues and quarrels, in which even the parson of the parish, *Dr. Rat*, was forced to interfere; and to its subsequent discovery, from its incommoding the seat of poor Hodge. The language is as low as the plot, being in the broadest provincial dialect of the age. The

* Mr. Payne Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry.
For the Four P.'s of Heywood, see the first volume.

† *Ralph Roister Doister* was written by *Nicholas Udall*, of whom nothing is known.

‡ Hawkins's Origin of the English Stage, vol. ii.

sentiments are on a par with both, being so vulgar as to be revolting. The humour — such as it is — would not be tolerated in the present day: it is grotesque, coarse, absurd. In proof of this, we might extract the opening verses, in which *Hodge* complains to *Deacon* of the rent in his indescribables, and the latter condoles with him on his disaster; but the passage is too gross. He is informed that there is sad work at home; that his mistress, *Gammer Gurton*, and her maid *Tib*, have been "by the ears together"; that the house is a perfect bedlam. *Hodge* protests that he expected something very serious would be the matter, from the gadding of Tom Tankard's cow, which had that very morning "frisked her tail" in a way he had not seen for seven long years. In great anxiety he hastens to the house, meets *Tib*, and demands the cause of the bustle. Had somebody stolen the gammer's fowls, or gelded her cat? Had her stool upset, and she suffered by the fall?

" *Jib.*

" Nay, and that were the worst, we wold not greatly care.
For bursting of her buckle bone, or breakyng of her maire;
But greater, greater is her grief, as, Hodge, we all shall feele!

" *Hodge.*

" Gog's woundes, Jib! my gammer has never lost her neele?"

Tib assures him that such indeed is the direful misfortune. *Hodge* is in sad consternation; sure he is that the devil must have owed his mistress a heavy grudge. He asks how the disaster happened, and learns, that while the Gammer was diligently clouting his breeches, she perceived *Gib*, the cat, up to the ears in the milk-bowl. What careful housewife could stand such a sight? Down went the inexpressibles, up rose her crutch, and out of doors bounced the cat; but to her sad dismay, no vestige of the needle could afterwards be found.

Of this performance we have no wish to speak more. If the bishop really were the author, we hope, that in

the course of his earthly pilgrimage, he atoned for the fault.*

3. The second of the dramas to which we have alluded, was written by Thomas Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst (1527—1608), in conjunction, we are told, with Thomas Norton, who is said (we believe erroneously) to have written the first three acts. This is *Ferrex and Porrex*, sometimes called the *Tragedy of Gorbeduc*; and it was played before Elizabeth as early as 1561. One of its claims to our notice rests on the fact, that it is the first drama in our language written in *blank* verse. It has, however, another and a higher one: it is by far the best tragedy that appeared in English prior to its representation. The versification is vigorous, the diction frequently poetical, the sentiments noble, the plot not ill-conducted. For such a period, these are indeed high qualities; yet the piece has not the interest we should expect from it. There is no action; the incidents are developed by the dialogue; the speeches are long, tedious, fatiguing. A brief analysis, with two or three short extracts, will enable the reader to judge for himself.†

Gorbeduc, king of Britain, who is supposed to have reigned (see Geoffrey of Monmouth) some centuries before our Saviour's birth, has two sons, *Ferrex and Porrex*. Though we are required to believe that the law of primogeniture was in full activity, the old king wishes to divide his realm between them; and, as the infirmities of age are already upon him, to invest them during his life with the possession of power. In vain do his counsellors endeavour to dissuade him from his purpose, the accomplishment of which, they predict, must necessarily lead to civil strife. The partition is made. Soon the favourites of each prince instil into his mind jealousy, suspicion, hatred of the other; and

* The preceding account of Dr. Still and Gammer Gurton's Needle, is derived from the same authorities as those referred to in the sketch of Richard Edwards, and from Hawkins' Origin of the English Drama.

† This account of Lord Buckhurst, and of the Tragedy of Gorbeduc, is derived from the same sources.

even the queen, *Videna,* whose heart is set on the elder, just as *Gorbeduc's* is on the younger son, zealously adds fuel to the flame. *Porrex,* in apprehension that his brother may seek to deprive him of his portion, and thereby unite what primogenital law has sanctioned, arms to prevent the spoliation. *Ferrex,* hearing of this circumstance, and being taught to believe that the ambition of his brother will be satisfied with nothing less than the whole, also raises troops. At length both advance to the field. It is here that the third act opens, with the lamentations of the aged *Gorbeduc* on the threatening aspect of things. The allusion to the catastrophe of Troy would be ridiculous enough in any other country than Britain; but here, nothing could be more appropriate, considering that most veracious fact, — the descent of the British monarchs from the Trojan line of princes!

"O cruel fates! O mindful wrath of Gods!
Whose vengeance neither Simois's stained stream,
Flowing with blood of Trojan princes slain,
Nor Phrygian fields made rank with corpses dead,
Of Asia's kings and lords, can yet appease!
No slaughter of unhappy Priam's race,
Nor Ilion's fall, — made level with the soil,
Can yet suffice; but still continued rage
Pursues our lives, and from the farthest seas
Doth chase the issue of destroyed Troy.
Call no man happy till his end be seen!"

The noble author might, we should think, have blamed the old man's policy, and not fate, for the evils now impending. By his counsellors, Gorbeduc is advised to send for both princes, and thus prevent the battle. But fate is not to be averted: before his interference can be fully exercised, the elder falls by the hands of the younger.

The fourth act opens with the lamentation of Videna, on the death of her favourite son, and with curses loud and deep on the author of the deed. She concludes with this apostrophe of Porrex: —

"Shall I *still* think that from this womb thou sprung?
No, traitor, no! I thee refuse for mine:
Never, O wretch, this womb conceived *thee!*
Thou never suck'st the milk of woman's breast,
But from thy birth the cruel tiger's teats
Have nursed thee! nor yet of flesh and blood
Formed is thy heart, but of hard iron wrought,
And wild and desert woods bred thee to life!"

This language must not be compared with that which, on a similar occasion, a modern dramatist would put into the mouth of the queen. Let it be compared with any the age could afford, and we shall at once acknowledge its superiority. In this piece we recognise the foundation of our legitimate tragedy. Rant it has, bombast it has, and in many other instances it is disfigured by false taste; but we must remember that these defects belonged rather to the period than the writer, while the merit is his alone. In illustration of this favourable view of the piece, we give one extract more.

Porrex, after the catastrophe of his brother's death, arrives in obedience to his father's summons, at court; and endeavours to exculpate himself by urging that what he has done has been done purely in self-defence; that his life had been constantly in danger from both open and concealed foes; that, in short he had been *compelled* to become a fratricide. He is commanded to retire while the king deliberates on his fate. But deliberation is soon ended; for in his sleep he is stabbed by his mother, Videna, in revenge for the death of her favourite son. This rueful intelligence is brought to the king by *Marcella,* a lady of the queen's bedchamber.

"Oh where is ruth? or where is pity now?
Whither is gentle heart and mercy fled?
Are they exiled out of our stony breasts,
Never to make return? Is all the world
Drowned in blood and sunk in cruelty?
If not in *women* mercy may be found,—
If not, alas! within the mother's breast
To her own child,—to her own flesh and blood.—
If ruth be banished thence—if pity *there*.

May have no place, — if *there* no gentle heart
Do live and dwell, — *where* should we seek it then?

" *Gorbeduc.*

" Madam, alas! what means your woful tale?

" *Marcella.*

" Porrex, alas! is by his mother slain, —
And with her hand! — a woful thing to tell!
The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wound,
Out of his wretched slumber quickly starts,
Whose strength now failing straight him overthrew,
When in his fall his eyes even now unclosed,
Beheld the queen and cried to her for help!
We then, alas! — the ladies which that time
Did there attend — seeing the heinous deed,
And hearing him oft call the wretched name
Of mother, — and cry to *her* for aid,
Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound!
Pitying alas! — for nought else could we do —
This ruthful end, ran to the woful bed,
Despoiled straight his breast, and all we might
Wiped in vain, with napkins next at hand,
The sudden streams of blood that flowed fast
Out of the gaping wound. Oh what a look,
Oh what a ruthful steadfast eye methought
He fixed upon my face! which to my death
Will never part from me. When with a braid
A deep-fetched sigh he gave, and therewithal
Clasping his hands together he cast his sight,
And straight pale death piercing within his face,
The flying ghost his wretched corpse forsook."

Sackville was a poet no less than a dramatist. He it was who projected, and who partly executed, that remarkable work, *the Mirror of Magistrates*. The design, which was formed about the year 1557, was, though not quite original, striking. All the illustrious characters of English history, whose lives had been unfortunate, — a wide field! — from the conquest to the end of the fourteenth century, were to pass in review before the poet, who, like Dante, visited the infernal regions, under the guidance of *Sorrow*. Every one of them was to relate his misfortunes. But he had not leisure, — who, indeed, ever *could* have? — to execute such a design.

He wrote only what he calls the *Indication*,—a kind of preface to it; nor did he finish more than one life,—that of Henry Stafford, duke of Buckingham. This was to have been the *last* in his series; but he recommended the execution of the work, in accordance with the original design, to Richard Baldwyn and George Ferrers. They, too, appear to have been deterred by its magnitude: at least, they invited others to assist them. The Chronicles of Febyan and Hall, which had just been published, were likely to furnish abundant materials for the task. Some of the catastrophes, especially those which had occurred during the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, were probably pointed out to them by Sackville himself: certainly, they are the most prominent features of the book. The design, as we have just observed, is not original: it is manifestly borrowed from the well-known work of Boccacio, *De Casibus Principum*, — a work which, as it contained no *English* names, could never be popular in this country. We shall make no extracts from the *Mirror of Magistrates*: that task has been amply performed by Warton, the historian of our poetry; and to him we refer such of our readers as may be desirous of estimating, in a more comprehensive manner than we can do, Sackville's merits as a poet. They will be found neither few nor small, regard being paid to his age, and to the quality of the poetry it produced.

Of Sackville's life, we have given no epitome, and for this reason: it relates to history rather than to literature. Suffice it to observe in the most summary manner, that in 1527, he was born at Buckhurst, in Sussex; that he studied at both our universities; that he entered at the Temple; that during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth he sat in parliament, and was, therefore, somewhat complying in his religious opinions; that his mind was expanded alike by study and travel; that in 1566, on the death of his father, he succeeded to an ample patrimony, yet not ample enough

for his dissipated habits; that in the following year he was raised to the peerage by the title of baron Buckhurst; that in 1573, he was chosen ambassador to Charles IX., king of France; that he was one of the most devoted and least scrupulous of Elizabeth's instruments, since he was one of the judges on the trials of Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk; Mary, queen of Scots; Philip, earl of Arundel; and the earl of Essex; that he was ambassador to the Low Countries, and employed on other important occasions; that in return for his services, he was made successively chancellor of Oxford, and high treasurer of England; that he was confirmed in these posts by James I., who created him earl of Dorset; and that he survived this elevation five years, unto the year 1608.

When we consider the number, the variety, the importance of lord Buckhurst's public duties, we shall cease to feel surprise that he wrote no other tragedy than the one we have mentioned; that he contributed so little to the *Mirror of Magistrates*; that during two thirds of his life, he renounced the worship of the muses. Had his lot been cast in private life, he would assuredly have proved one of the greatest benefactors to our early literature. In tragedy, no one that preceded him can for a moment be compared with him. In other branches of poetry, he had no superior until Spenser arose. His mind was cultivated not only by extensive classical learning, but by a diligent study of the best Italian writers, especially of Dante, whom he endeavoured to imitate, and whom he did imitate with more success than we should have expected from his youth, and from the age in which he lived. To him, Spenser, perhaps, even Milton, is indebted for some of his finest conceptions. He belonged to the Allegoric School, the offspring, as we have before intimated, of our old moralities; and he is the only writer, except his inimitable follower, Spenser, in whose hands allegory does not fall into contempt. Endowed with genius which, on most occasions, he regulated by a

more enlightened judgment than his predecessors, and, with one exception, than even his contemporaries; he must ever hold a respectable place among the poets of England.

4. Of *Thomas Norton*, the friend and the alleged coadjutor of Sackville in the composition of "Gorbeduc," we know little. He wrote, we are told, some fugitive pieces of poetry; but much of a poet he could not be, if we may judge from the twenty-seven psalms which he versified, and which are comprised in the notable version of his friends, Sternhold and Hopkins. They are, in every respect, so mediocre, that when we peruse them, we have scarcely patience to be told that he wrote the three acts of *Ferrex and Porrex*; indeed the paternity has been suspected before now. Well does Wentner observe, that "the force of critical evidence often prevails over the authority of assertion, — a testimony which is diminished by time, and may be rendered suspicious by a variety of circumstances. Throughout the whole piece there is an invariable uniformity of diction and versification." True it is, that every scene of *Ferrex and Porrex* is impressed by the characteristic manner of Sackville; a manner very different from that of Sternhold's coadjutor. If Norton really composed any portion of this play, it must have been *before* he embraced his Calvinistic principles; for *afterwards*, he must, of necessity, have regarded so profane an occupation with pious horror.

5. *Thomas Preston* (died 1570) was one of those inconsiderable writers, who, instead of advancing, may truly be said to have impeded, the establishment of our national drama. Into the particulars of his life we will not stoop to enquire: his only claim to distinction is, that he wrote the worst tragedy that appeared in the reign of Elizabeth, or that has appeared since her reign, or that ever will appear. This is *Cambises* *, which is

* "A Lamentable Tragedie, mixed ful of Pleesent Mirth, contayning the Life of Cambises, King of Persia, from the begynning of his kingdom to his death, his ever grand deed of execution; after that many wretched deeds and tyrannous murders committed by and through him; and last of all his odious death by God's justice appointed doon in such order as followeth."

believed to have had the honour of being immortalised by Shakespear.* The date of its publication cannot be determined, as the first edition is without one; but there is reason to infer, that it immediately followed the *Ferrex and Porrex* of Sackville. It has all the rudeness, without the simplicity, of our old moral plays: *Murder, Common-Cry, Common-Complaint, Smile, Ability, Proof, Execution, Diligence, Cruelty, Profanation, Trial,* and *Shame,* are characters of the piece; and to make the stupidity of its resemblance to the exploded morals still more striking, *Ambidexter,* the *Vice,* is introduced in all his ancient glory. To crown all, the mythological personages, *Venus and Cupid,* are employed to bring about one of the leading incidents! In conformity with this precious list of characters are the design, the conduct, the incidents of the piece. Most glorious of all, is the confusion of ancient and modern manners; of pagan gods and christian saints; of every thing irreconcilable and absurd. For some time we were inclined to the suspicion, that this tragedy had been written by some wag, to ridicule the absurdities of our infant drama; and the notion acquired something like confirmation from the fact, that the author, while performing a part in the Latin play of "Dido," before queen Elizabeth, so gratified that princess that she settled a pension on him. But this illusion was soon dispelled. Had he been so much of a wit, he would have exhibited some traces of it in his drama; he would have given something like *point* to his ridicule, and not have restrained himself so far as not to utter one sparkling, one redeeming thought, from the beginning to the end of his play. It is one tissue of stupidity; heavy as lead, and soporific as opium. Thomas Preston, doctor as he was, and member of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, was never guilty of a witticism, or of a lively expression, or of one dictated by common sense.

6. *George Gascoyne,* was more of a translator than any thing else. In 1566 appeared his review of

* Henry IV. act 2. sc. 4. "I will do it in King Cambyses' vein!"

Gli Suppositi of Ariosto. This is remarkable as being the first drama, whether original or translated, in our language, written in *prose*. It was a great innovation on the established custom. First rhyme, in the old ballad measure; then after the lapse of centuries, blank verse; and then prose, were certainly a great advance towards nature. Gascoyne wrote another piece,— *The Glass of Government,*—chiefly in the same form, though he introduced some verses into it. We have not seen it, but it is, says a living writer*, "a most tedious puritanical treatise on education, illustrated by the different talents and propensities of four young men placed under the same master: the two cleverer are seduced to vice, while the two duller persevere in a course of virtue, and one of them becomes secretary to the landgrave, the other a famous preacher. Nothing can be more uninteresting than the whole performance, although the author has laboured to enliven it by the introduction of a parasite, a bawd, a prostitute, a roister, and a knavish servant. The schoolmaster preaches a regular sermon, quoting chapter and verse, and reads a long lecture on the duties of honour, obedience, and love." This precious drama, which shows how easily our ancestors were gratified, was probably the last production of the author, who died in 1577: it was printed in 1575.

But for neither of them is he so well known as for his *Jocasta,* a translation, or rather an adaptation, of the *Phenissæ* of Euripides.† In this drama he was assisted by *Francis Kinwelmarsh,* who wrote the first and fourth acts, while he produced the second, third, and fifth. Of Kinwelmarsh we have nothing more, except a few poems in the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*: we know nothing whatever of his life. We give a specimen of his manner: it is taken from the first speech of Bailo to Antigone, in the first act of Jocasta: —

* Mr. Collier's Dramatic Poetry, iii. 7.

† See "Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain and Ireland," vol. i. p. 269.

"O gentle daughter of king Œdipus!
O sister dear to that unhappy wight,
Whom brother's rage hath reaved of his right,
To whom thou knowest, in young and tender yeares,
I was a friend and faithfull governor.
Come foorth, since that her grace hath granted leave,
And let me know what cause hath moved now
So chaste a maid to set her dainty foot
Over the threshold of her secret lodge?
Since that the town is furnisht every where
With men of arms and warlike instruments,
Unto our eares there comes no other noise,
But sound of trump and neight of trampling steeds,
Which running up and down from place to place
With hideous cries betoken love and death.
The blazing sun shineth not half so bright,
As it was wont to do at dawn of day;
The wretched dames throughout the woful town,
Together clustering to the temple go,
Beseeching Jove by way of humble plaint,
With tender ruth to pity their distress."

Gascoyne, however, has more facility of versification, though not more vigour. The fight between Eteocles and Polynices (Act v.) is not without merit, considering the period. The learned reader may compare it with the original, or we should rather say, the model of imitation; for this drama cannot, in strictness, be called a translation.

"So said Eteocles; and trumpets blown
To sound the summons of their bloody fight,
That one the other fiercely did encounter,
Like lions two, both fraught with boiling wrath,
Both couched their lances full against the face.
But heaven would not that there they should them teint;
Upon the battered shields the mighty spears
Are both broke, and in a thousand shivers
Amid the air flown up into the heavens.
Behold again with naked swords in hand,
Each one the other furiously assaults.
Here they of Thebes, there stood the Greeks in doubt,
Of whom doth each man feel more chilling dread,
Lest any of the twaine should lose his life,
Then any of the twaine did feel in fight.

Their angry looks, their deadly daunting blows,
Might witness well that in their hearts remained,
As cankered hate, disdain, and furious mood,
As ever bred in bear or tyger's breast."

The reader will have perceived that this tragedy is in *blank* verse. This is the *second* drama in which that novel manner was employed, — Sackville's *Ferrex and Porrex* being the first. It must not, however, be supposed that either of these writers invented it, or even introduced it. It had been first used by lord Surrey in his translation of some portions of the Æneid; and by that noble writer it was properly termed "a strange measure." It might be supposed that a measure which offered such facilities to the poet, — which was not shackled by rhyme, yet which retained all the advantages of poetry — would be generally and speedily adopted. Such, however, does not appear to have been the case; and unless there has been a great destruction in our old dramatic literature, full twenty years elapsed before it was again imitated by any writer.

8. While on the subject of classical imitations, we may add something to what was said in the first volume of these Lives.* It was there observed, "that before the middle of the sixteenth century, the Roman history was ransacked for subjects of the drama;" and that "the next step was directly to imitate the classic dramatists."

Probably, as there stated, the Andria of Terence "was the first attempt of the kind in our language." In like manner, "*Jack Jugeler*" was founded on the first comedy of Plautus.* This, however, partakes so largely of the nature of our ancient moral plays, that we can in no sense term it a translation: if many of the characters are classic, the language, the spirit, and the manners, are English of the sixteenth century. Still the fact remains the same, — that classic antiquity was studied with great ardour. *Jocasta* itself was

* Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain and Ireland. Vol. I. p. 262. 268, 269, 270.
† Ibid. p. 268.

preceded by the ten tragedies of Seneca. These appeared successively in 8vo. between the years 1559 and 1566. Three were from the pen of Jasper Heywood, son of the celebrated epigrammatist: these were the *Troas, Thyestes*, and *Hercules Furens*. *Œdipus* (1563) was by Alexander Neville; *Medea* and *Agamemnon* (1566) by John Studley, who subsequently added *Hippolytus* and *Hercules Œtæus*. Of the rest, *Octavia* was undertaken by Thomas Nuce, and the *Thebais* by Thomas Newton. It must not, however, be understood that these are mere translations: in some instances they diverge considerably from the original. This is particularly the case in regard to Heywood and Studley, who added whole scenes and choruses. Even Neville, who is the least able of the men to whom classical literature is thus indebted, acknowledges that he had "sometimes boldly presumed to err from his author, roving at random where he list, adding and subtracting at his pleasure." This, indeed, was unavoidable; for no literal version of the ancient dramas would have been tolerated even in the closet, for which they were designed. But there were other pieces founded on classical subjects, and actually represented: these were probably half translated, half composed. The following eighteen were represented at court, between the years 1568 and 1580: —

Orestes.
Iphigenia.
Ajax and Ulysses.
Narcissus.
Alcmæon.
Quintus Fabius.
Timocles.
Perseus and Andromeda.
Mutius Scævola.
History of Cynocæphali.
History of a Greek Maid.
Rape of the Second Helen.
Titus and Gesyppus.
Four Sons of Fabius.
Scipio Africanus.
Sarpedon.
Pampey.
Mamillia.

Of these, however, none survive; and when we add, that twenty-four dramas of a different character, chiefly founded on modern history and fable, — appeared

about the same time we may form some notion of the amazing fecundity of our stage during a period of which so little is known to the general reader. They too have perished; yet these is strong reason for inferring that some of them have been partially transfused into more recent dramas. The custom, indeed, of later dramatists — Shakespear amongst the rest — was to adopt old pieces as the bases of their labours, to add or curtail, to condense or expand, as might seem best suited to the time.*

9. At the rest of the more remarkable dramas written prior to Shakespear's age we can merely glance. *The Tragedy of Tancred and Gismund*, which was exhibited (1568) before Elizabeth, at the Inner Temple, was the first play in our language founded on an Italian original; — a source soon to become fruitful enough. It was taken from one of Boccaccio's novels, and was the composition of five different persons, whose names we have no wish to rescue from oblivion. It appears to have been written in rhyme; for though the second edition (1592) is chiefly in blank verse, there is little doubt that, by expressions on the title, "newly revised and published, according to the decorum of these days," we are to understand the change of the one form of metre for the other. This, indeed, is confirmed from internal evidence; for many passages still remain in rhyme. We perceive that this unnatural, jingling measure was, in 1592, no longer tolerated on the stage. The interval, however, viz. from 1570 to 1592, was often distinguished by such compositions, though they were relieved by frequent passages in the more natural measure. But the majority of the pieces were in blank verse, with frequent passages in rhyme. *The Knack to know a Knave, The History of Sir Clyoman and Clemydes, The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune, Arden of Feversham*, were of this class. And they have another peculiarity: they

are among the latest of our dramas which partake of the spirit of the old morals, though in a degree much inferior to compositions half a century older. But we shall not dwell on characteristics which have already been sufficiently described. The period had worthier compositions. *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, a tragedy by Thomas Hughes *, of whom nothing is known, save that he was a member of Gray's Inn, is, with the exception of two choruses, wholly in blank verse; and it is a very respectable performance. Its versification is superior to that of *Ferrex and Porrex*; and its sentiments are quite as natural. It has, however, some defects which Sackville knew how to avoid. It is too strictly formed on the ancient models; the unities are observed; dialogue supplies the place of action; while the nuntios and the chorus do the rest. Yet, with all this cold, unimpassioned discourse, the drama will please. Its interest, however, is far inferior to that inspired by those which form our domestic tragedy. Of this class are, *Arden of Feversham*, which was founded on a murder in the reign of Edward VI.; *A Warning for Fair Women*, derived from a more recent event; *Four Tragedies in One*, partly founded on the assassination of a London merchant; *The Fair Maid of Bristol*, originating in a similar fact; and, though much subsequent, *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, which some critics have not hesitated to ascribe to Shakespear. For the superior success of such pieces, we cannot be surprised: the feelings of our common nature always acquire intensity, in proportion to the reality of events, and the proximity of time and place.

From the preceding observations, it is evident that the intellectual activity, so conspicuous in the latter half of the sixteenth century, has never been surpassed. We have already alluded to fifty-two pieces, of which

* The body of the tragedy was written by Hughes. Seven other persons, among whom were Mr. (afterwards lord) Bacon, wrote the choruses, the introduction, two speeches, &c.

no vestige remains, unless the substance of them lives in more recent productions: and these arose and fell in twelve years, viz. from 1568 to 1580. That the later years were not less prolific, may be proved by the instances of Anthony Munday, Henry Chettle, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, George Peele, and others, who wrote innumerable dramas, though most of them have not come down to our days. But the most striking illustration of this subject is afforded by the fact that, from February, 1591, to July, 1597, 110 new pieces were performed; and that, from October, 1597, to March 1603, 160 more were added to the list. We are, however, trespassing on Shakespear's age, and we must classify our gleanings under a different head.

2. *The Stage in the Time of Shakespear.*

10. We are now arrived at Shakespear's dramatic contemporaries, — men, though they began to write before he did, who not only lived at the same time, but for some time divided with him the attention of the play-going world. This circumstance must raise the curiosity of every reader, since every one must be anxious to see the actual condition of our stage when that extraordinary genius appeared upon it, — how much he is indebted to it, and it to him.

Robert Greene*, the first of these contemporaries (he died in 1592), was a native of Norwich. The time of his birth is unknown; but it could not well have been later than 1560, as in 1578 he took, at Cambridge, his bachelor's degree. If, as many of his biographers have suspected, and as some have positively asserted, he was the same Robert Greene whom, in 1576, we find one of the queen's chaplains, and rector of

* For the following account of Greene, we are indebted to Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss; to several instruments in Malone's Shakspeare, by Boswell; to three of Greene's prose tracts; to Collier's History of the Stage and Dramatic Poetry; to Baker's Biographia Dramatica; to some notices in Dodsley's Old Plays, last edition; to Campbell's Specimens of British Poets; to Dyce's recent edition of Greene's Works, &c.

Walkington, he must have been born some years earlier. By one writer it has been affirmed — we know not on what authority — that in 1584 he was presented to the vicarage of Tollesbury, in Essex, which he resigned the year following. It is certain that the year *preceding* this (1583) he took his master's degree; and, as the statutes of the university provided that no dispensation for holding a *second* living should be granted to any one *below* that degree, we have something like a presumption that Greene the clergyman, and Greene the dramatist, were the same individual. In confirmation of this inference we may add, that by one contemporary writer he is styled "*his Reverence*;" and that a note, unquestionably written by another contemporary, on the titlepage of an old play attributed to him, may be understood in the same sense.* After all, however, we have presumption only for the statement, and it might be weakened by some considerations. If the dramatist were really a clergyman, the fact must have been notorious to the world; yet by none of those whom his irregularities had alienated, or his ridicule provoked, is he taunted with a charge which, considering the dissipation of his later years, would have been of the severest kind. If the dramatist were a clergyman, Gabriel Harvey, his enemy, who pursued his memory with the most vindictive rancour, would, we should suppose, have dwelt on his dishonouring his gown; yet he gives us no other intimation than what is afforded by the cynical epithet of "his Reverence." In the third place, we have no proof that the *Pinner of Wakefield* was written by Greene; indeed we have no evidence for the assertion beyond the note below. Internally it has not the least impress of his peculiar manner, — none of his bombast, his raving frenzy, his affectation; it is too natural and too vigorous for him. Add that his name was probably as common a one as any in that age, and we shall hesitate

* *The Pinner of Wakefield*, "Written by a *minister*, who played the part of the *Pinner* himself."

before we positively identify the clerical with the dramatic individual. On this subject, enveloped as it is in so much uncertainty, we will not venture to decide. To the memory of the dramatist, as we shall soon perceive, enough of reproach must for ever remain attached; and until stronger evidence be adduced, we will not help to load it with greater infamy.

The events of this person's life are wrapt in some obscurity. Until his premature death, and the malignity which, as we shall perceive, followed him beyond the tomb, nobody took any trouble to ascertain what he had been, or what he had done. It was sufficient for the world to know that he was a popular writer. He was not, indeed, very anxious that the details of a life so profligate as his should be scanned too nicely. His profligacy appears to have commenced from his residence at college; but it was greatly confirmed, as he himself acknowledges, by a tour on the Continent, especially in Italy. The vices, the infidelity of the period, are well known to the readers of ecclesiastical history. If they scandalised such a man as Martin Luther, who had visited the eternal city half a century before, they were sure to have a severer effect on Greene: the former had sufficient depth of religious conviction to contrast the conduct with the professions of the priesthood, and from the exercise to derive profit; the latter, having apparently no religious impressions, or at least none but those of a transient character, converted every thing which he saw into moral poison. In his "Repentance,"—a tract which he wrote in 1592, the very year of his death—he confesses that he saw and practised such villanies as were too abominable to be mentioned. On his return, he was not likely to edify the world by his example. That he was dissolute, profligate, worthless, the companion of ruffians and courtezans, is certain; but we are scarcely able to trace the gradations of his guilt. There are, indeed, two works of his,— his *Never too Late*, and his *Groatsworth of Wit bought by a Million of Repentance*,—(the

former printed two years before his death, the latter immediately after it) which under feigned names undoubtedly embody some of his adventures. For this inference we have, in the one case, the evidence of his known adventures with some of those attributed to Francesco in Never too Late: in the other, we have his own direct testimony that Roberto's life agreed for the most part with his own. The incidents, however in both pieces are so heightened, so exaggerated, that though the foundation is true, nothing is more difficult than to determine what we ought to receive as fact. We will rapidly consider each in succession, and leave the reader to judge how far they are conformable with the real actions of this adventurer. We commence with the *Never too Late.**

In the city of Caerbranck, during the reign of Palmerin, king of Britain, there dwelt a gentleman named Francesco. Though his lineage was worshipful, his substance was not great; and he was constrained to live in great moderation. At length he fell in love with the daughter of an old country gentleman, declared himself, and was accepted by her, provided he could obtain the father's consent. This, however, he was unable to compass: he had not wealth enough for *her* hand. He was forbidden the house and the young lady carefully placed under bolt and bar. Nay, lest she should think of escaping from the window, her very clothes were taken from her every night before she retired to rest. But the ardour of the lovers was not to be quenched: they bribed a domestic to open a communication between them; and at midnight Francesco contrived to run away with the fair Isabel—a large man's cloak serving

* Greene's Never too Late; or a Powder of Experience, sent to all youthfull Gentlemen, to roote out the infectious follies, that over-reeching conceits foster in the spring time of their youth. Decyphering in a true English Historie those particular vanities, that with their frostie vapours nip the blossoms of every ripe braine, from attaining to his intended perfection: as pleesent as profitable, being a right pumice stone, apt to race out Idleness with Delight, and Follie with Admiration. Robert Greene in Artibus Magyster. Omne tulit punctum. London, 1590.

to screen her from the cold. The following morning a pursuit was begun; but before the lovers could be found, the indissoluble knot had been tied. Their lives were for some time happy: he keeping a school, and she employing her leisure in ornamental needle work. But business at length called him to the capital, where he was occupied nine weeks. At the conclusion of this period, though he sometimes wished, he had not resolution to return home: he was smitten by a syren, who dwelt on the opposite side of the street in which he lived. Being now entangled by her wiles, he forgot his home, his duty, his virtuous partner, and infant son, and lavished all that he had on the mistress. When his funds were exhausted, his very clothes sold, and arrests threatening him, she, of course, forbad him the house. To return to his wife was his first wish; but how face her in such a state, after an absence too of three years? He resolved rather to die. At length he fell in with some players, and was persuaded to to try what he could do in comedy. He succeeded beyond his hopes; and in a year or two more, was able to revisit his deserted home, probably for the purpose of bringing his wife to town.

Such is the account which Robert Greene wishes to be received as his early experience in the marriage state. It is sufficiently dishonourable to his memory. It is, however, drawn in colours much too favourable. There is reason to doubt whether he *ever* returned to the suffering, faithful, woman he had abandoned. Certainly, as we shall soon perceive, they had not lived together for some years before his death; and we have evidence enough to show that he has passed gently over his irregularities during his early residence in the metropolis, especially after his connection with the stage. But when he wrote this *Never too Late*, he probably intended — evanescent were all his good intentions — to reform, and was unwilling to let the world know the depth of his depravity. But in his *Groat's Worth of*

Wit *, a portion of which he undoubtedly composed during his last illness, he is more sincere, more open, more anxious to obtain forgiveness of his sins by an acknowledgment of them The following analysis will be read with much greater pain than the preceding.

An old man, who had amassed a large fortune by usury, had two sons, Lucanio and Roberto. The eldest was his favourite, was instructed in his arts, and taught to love gold; the younger was bred a scholar, and was married to a respectable woman. As the conduct of the one pleased, so that of the other reproached the old man; upon his death-bed, having mentioned his great substance, he said: — "All which, Lucanio, I bequeath to thee; only I reserve for Roberto, thy well read brother, an old groat (being the start I first began with), wherewith I wish him to buy a groat's worth of wit; for he in my life has refused my manner of life, and therefore at my death shall not be contaminated with corrupt gain." No sooner was the old man departed, than Roberto, incensed at the legacy, resolved to do his brother all the harm he could. His first care was to surround Lucanio with the most seductive, yet the most profligate companions: another was to engage a beauty of light reputation to lure him into her nets, to pluck him as bare as possible, and to share the spoil with Roberto. The frequent and valuable presents made to this woman, and still more his losses at dice, soon lessened the ample store of the elder brother; and the younger began to think it high time to share the booty he had been the means of procuring. The result may be conceived.

"But she, secundum mores meretricis, jested thus with the scholar. "Why, Roberto, are you so well read, and yet shew yourself so shallow witted, to deem women so weak of conceit that they see not into men's demerits? Suppose that to make you my stale to catch the woodcock your brother, my tongue,

* Greene's Groat's-worth of Witte, bought with a Million of Repentance; describing the Folly of Youth, the Falsehood of Make-shift Flatterers, the Misery of the Negligent, and Mischiefes of Deceyving Curtezans: published at his dying request. This work was published after Greene's death by his friend Henry Chettle.

overrunning mine intent, I did speak of liberal reward: but what I promised, there is the point — at least what I part with, I will be well advised. It may be you will thus reason: 'had not Roberto trained Lucanio unto Lamilia's lure, Lucanio had not now been Lamilia's prey: therefore, since by Roberto she possesseth her prize, Roberto merits an equal part.' Monstrous absurd if you so reason! As well may you reason thus: 'Lamilia's dog hath killed her a deer, therefore his mistress must make him a pasty.' Once more, pennyless poet, thou art beguiled in me; and yet I wonder how thou couldest, thou hast been so often beguiled. But it fareth with licentious men as with the chased boar in the stream, who being greatly refreshed with swimming, never feels any smart until he perish, insensibly wounded with his own weapons. Unreasonable Roberto, that having but a broker's place, asked a lender's reward. Faithless Roberto, that hast attempted to betray thy brother, irreligiously forsaking thy wife, and deservedly been in thy father's eye an abject, — thinkest thou Lamilia so loose as to consort with one so lewd? No, hypocrite! the sweet gentleman, thy brother, will I till death love, and thee, while I live, loath. This share Lamilia gives, — other gettest thou none!"

It was now Roberto's object to open the eyes of his deceived brother; but the syren was beforehand with him. She represented his proposal, his attempt, his conduct in its true light; and little difficulty had she in prevailing on Lucanio to forbid the pest his house, and never to see him again. The despair of Roberto may be easily imagined. It would, indeed, have killed him, had he not fallen in with a player, who advised him to write for the stage. It was, at that time, a most disreputable profession, as Roberto found to his cost. The scene grew, as he informs us, *a malo in pejus*, from bad to worse. However he earned money, while his brother Lucanio spending what remained, was in about two years left destitute. Then Roberto visited him, — not, as may be supposed, to relieve his necessities, but to insult him in his misfortunes, to make him the butt of his wit, of his most bitter sarcasms. Unable to withstand this merciless treatment, Lucanio became a pimp, and remained one to his death. In the meantime Roberto proceeded in his dishonourable profession, in

his guilty intercourse with the offcasts of the world, in his unbridled dissipation. Sometimes, he observes, his purse was full; sometimes it was empty through his dissolute habits. If he was paid for a dramatic or any other piece beforehand, he never performed his contract, — since honesty was too vulgar a thing for him! The consequence was soon want of credit and misery.

"He had shifts of lodgings, where in every place his hostess writ up woful remembrance of him, his laundress and his boy, — for they were ever his household — besides retainers in sundry other places. This company were lightly the lewdest in the land, — apt for pilfery, perjury, forgery, or any other villainy."

He learned, he tells us, to cheat at cards and dice; — the tricks no less than the slang of all gamblers, thieves, rogues, pimps, and prostitutes. Some of his companions came to a shameful end; even the brother of the mistress he kept (apparently his washerwoman, and the mother of the boy always with him), a ruffian named Ball, suffered at Tyburn; yet this had no effect on him, any more than the frequent endeavours of his forsaken wife to bring him to repentance. He persevered in the same course, in spite of remonstrance, and of occasional twitches of conscience, until he was overtaken by his last illness; until, without credit, without friends, without money, encumbered by debts in every place, constantly pursued by the officers of the law, despised and deserted by the world, he reached the last melancholy scene of life.

That much of this melancholy relation is applicable to Greene, is beyond dispute. He, himself, assures us that the life of this Roberto agreed, for the most part, with his. We know, too, from other authority, that he forsook an amiable wife; that he kept the vilest company; that to warn society against the tricks of thieves, cheats, gamblers, and knaves of every kind, he wrote no less than four treatises to expose their arts, and that, too, notwithstanding their threats of vengeance; that he kept as his mistress the sister of the infamous Cutting

Ball, who with a band of ruffians long protected him from arrest, and who was hung at Tyburn; that by this woman he had an illegitimate son, who survived him; that he ran into debt with impunity, at once unable and unwilling to pay; that when his credit failed him, he had recourse to the vilest shifts; that he scoffed at religion, at God, at another world; that, in short, he was thoroughly reprobate. Such a life could not, and did not, end in peace; he was, as we proceed to show, cut off in the prime of his days, — as early, it is believed, as his thirty-second year, — and his eyes were closed amidst circumstances as melancholy as any that are to be found in the whole range of biography.

It was early in August, 1592, that Greene held the fatal banquet which terminated in his death. It consisted of pickled herrings and Rhenish wine,—the most injurious meal he could have chosen, — and he indulged immoderately in both. His chief guest was Nash, a well known dramatist of the period. He was immediately seized by a complaint in the bowels, accompanied by inflammation and swelling, which gradually spread upwards to his heart. During the month which intervened between this attack and his death, his condition was truly wretched: his lodgings were at a poor shoemaker's in the Dowgate, and there can be no doubt, but that for the compassion shown him he must have perished for want of the common necessaries of life. The poor man could ill afford to maintain him a month, little as he required, but he did what he could without complaining; and the kindness of the shoemaker's wife, who acted as his nurse, is mentioned with praise. She had admired, she now pitied him; and she no doubt grieved that she could not furnish him with the things which his appetite craved. She wept as she afterwards related how plaintively he had begged for a pennyworth of Malmesbury; whether he procured it, we know not. She and the mother of his illegitimate child, were, we are told, the only persons who visited him on his bed of death; in this, his hour of need, he was forsaken by all, even

by Nash, the companion of his drunkenness. This, however, is not strictly true; for certainly Henry Chettle, a fertile but forgotten writer, who published both his *Groat's-worth of Wit* and his *Repentance*, who transcribed a portion of both, and added something at the close, must have received his dying instructions: however, this is scarcely a relief to the dark and melancholy parts of the picture. To heighten the picture of his destitution, we need only observe, that he was in a sad state of filth for want of clean linen; that he had but one shirt, and when it was washed, he was glad to borrow one from the shoemaker; that his mistress and his son were equally ragged, and equally consumed by vermin. In that state he died September the 3d, and the same charity that had supported him in his last days, bore his expenses to the tomb.

Affecting as is the account of Greene's destitution, we have the consolation to perceive that repentance visited him on his death-bed. His infidelity no longer troubled him; and he was anxious to make some reparation to society for the mischiefs he had done it. Hence he penned the greater part of the tract which bears the title of his "Repentance," and which was continued after his death.* In the same view, too, he finished his *Groat's-worth of Wit*, which he desired to be published after his decease. Another motive might, in these cases, be assigned for his last literary efforts,— the natural one of leaving a trifle to his mistress and child, or, at least, of discharging a portion of his more urgent debts. For his wife, in a pecuniary sense, he seems to have had no anxiety; but he was anxious enough that she would forgive him, and that she would see the poor shoemaker, to whom he owed ten pounds, — a large sum in that day — and to whom he had given his bond for the money, paid in full. Nothing can be more affecting than one passage of the letter, which he wrote

* The Repentance of Robert Greene, Meister of Artes; Wherein by himselfe is laid open his loose life, with the manner of his death. London, 1592. This book was also prepared for the press by Chattle, in conformity with the author's wish.

to his forsaken, much injured wife, whom he had not seen for six years, the day before his death. "Doll, I charge thee by the love of our youth and by my soul's rest, that thou wilt see this man paid: for if he and his wife had not succoured me, I had died in the streets." In other passages he earnestly entreated her forgiveness, and prayed for the divine mercy on his soul. But, alas, how frail is human nature! This very man, who thus implored the divine grace, and who died in circumstances of unexampled humiliation, desired his hostess to crown his dead body with bays, and his wish was obeyed.

Another proof of his repentance, and we may well add, of his vanity, is to be found in a letter which he wrote on his death-bed to some of his fellow dramatists, and which is extracted from his *Groat's-worth of Wit.* As this letter is very characteristic, as it is addressed to Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele; and above all, as it evidently alludes to Shakespear, we give it entire * : —

" *To those Gentlemen, his quondam acquaintance, that spend their wit in making Plays, Robert Greene wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities.*

" If woful experience may move you, gentlemen, to beware, or unheard of wretchedness intreat you to take heed, I doubt not that you will look back with sorrow on your time past, and endeavour with repentance to spend that which is to come. Wonder not (for with thee will I first begin) thou famous gracer † of tragedians, that Greene, who hath said with thee like the fool in his heart, '*There is no God,*' should now give glory unto His greatness: for penetrating is His power; His hand lies heavy upon me; He hath spoken to me in a voice of thunder, and I have left (felt) He is a God that can punish enemies. Why should thy excellent wit, His gift, be so blinded that thou shouldest give no glory to the Giver? Is it pestilent Machiavelian policy that thou hast studied? O brutish folly! What are his rules but mere confused mockeries, able to extirpate in small time the generation of mankind. For if sic volo, sic jubeo, hold in those that are able to command: and if it be lawful, *fas et nefas*, to do anything that is beneficial; only tyrants should possess the earth, and they striving to

* We have modernised the orthography.
† Christopher Marlowe.

exceed in tyranny, should each to other be a slaughterman: 'till the mightiest outliving all, one stroke were left for death, that in one age man's life should end. The broacher of this diabolical atheism is dead, and his life had never the felicity he aimed at, but as he began in craft, lived in fear, and ended in despair.* *Quam inscrutabilia sunt Dei judicia.* This murderer of many brethren had his conscience seared like Cain. This betrayer of Him who gave his life for him inherited the portion of Judas. This apostate perished as ill as Julian; and wilt thou, my friend, be his disciple? Look up to me, by him persuaded to that liberty, and thou shalt find it an infernal bondage. I know the least of my demerits merit this miserable death; but wilful striving against known truth, exceedeth all the terrors of my soul. Defer not (with me) till this last point of extremity; for little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited.

"With thee I join young Juvenal, that biting satirist, that lastly with me together writ a comedy. Sweet boy, might I advise thee, be advised, and get not many enemies by bitter words. Enough against vain men, for thou canst do it, no man better, no man so well: thou hast a liberty to reprove all, but name none; for one being spoken to, all are offended; none being blamed, no man is injured. Stop shallow water, still running, it will rage; tread on a worm, and it will turn: then blame not scholars who are vexed with sharp and bitter lines, if they reprove thy too much liberty of reproof.

"And thou, no less deserving than the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferior, driven (as myself) to extreme shifts; a little have I to say to thee: and were it not an idolatrous oath, I would swear by sweet Saint George, thou art unworthy better hap, sith thou dependest on so mean a stay. Base-minded men all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned; for unto none of you (like me) sought those burs to cleave; those puppets (I mean) that speak from our mouths; those antics garnished in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they all have been beholding, shall (were ye in that case that I am now), be left of them at once forsaken? Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you! And being an absolute John Factotum, is, in his own conceit, the only shake-scene in a country. Oh that I might entreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses: and let these apes imitate your past excel-

* Supposed to be Francis Kett, who was elected Fellow of Bennet College, Cambridge, in 1573, and who in 1589—three years before Greene's death—was burnt at Norwich for his opinions.

lence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. I know the best husband of you all will never prove an usurer, and the kindest of them all will never prove a kind nurse; yet, whilst you may, seek you better masters: for it is a pity men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasures of such rude grooms.

"In this I might insert two more, that both have writ against these buckram gentlemen; but let their own work serve to witness against their own wickedness, if they persevere to maintain so many peasants. For other new comers, I leave them to the mercy of these painted monsters, who (I doubt not) will drive the best-minded to despise them: for the rest, it skills not though they make a jest at them.

"But now return I again to you three, knowing my misery is to you no news: and let me heartily entreat you to be warned by my harms. Delight not (as I have done) in irreligious oaths; for from the blasphemer's house a curse shall not depart. Despise drunkenness, which wasteth the wit, and maketh men all equal unto beasts. Fly lust, as the death'sman of the soul, and defile not the temple of the Holy Ghost! Abhor those epicures, whose loose life hath made religion loathsome to your ears; and when they sooth you with terms of mastership, remember Robert Greene, whom they have often so flattered, perishes now for want of comfort. Remember, gentlemen, your lives are like so many light tapers, that are with care delivered to all of you to maintain: these, with wind-puffed wrath, may be extinguished, which drunkenness puts out, which negligence lets fall: for man's time of itself not so short, but it is more shortened by sin. The fire of my light is now at the last snuff, and the want of wherewith to sustain it: there is no substance for life to feed on. Trust not then (I beseech you), to such weak stays, for they are as changeable in mind as in many attires. Well, my hand is tired, and I am forced to leave where I would begin; for a whole book cannot contain their wrongs, which I am forced to knit up in some few lines of words."

We have extracted the preceding with the greater pleasure, to show that Greene was truly penitent; and that if dissipation had led him astray, the basis of his character was not wholly bad. How melancholy, that he who could thus advise others, had not had resolution enough to apply that advice unto himself!

By the "upstart crow beautified in our feathers," there can be no doubt, as Mr. Tyrwhitt was the first to

observe, that Shakespear is meant. The following expression,—

"Tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide,"

is a parody on the well-known verse of Shakespear, in Henry VI., Part 3.,—

"O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide!"

And the one immediately succeeding, "he is, in his own conceit, the only *Shake-scene* in the country," makes the application too plain to be misunderstood. But in what manner, the inquisitive reader may inquire, was Shakespear indebted to Greene and his dramatic friends? To understand this subject the more clearly, we must observe, that in the beginning of his career — for years, indeed, after he became connected with the stage—that extraordinary man was satisfied with reconstructing the pieces which others had composed; he was not the author, but the adapter of them to the stage. Indeed, we are of opinion, that the number of plays which he thus re-cast, as well as those in which he made very slight alterations, is greater than any of his commentators have supposed. The second and third parts of King Henry VI. were, we all know, founded on two old pieces; viz., the first part of the contention of "the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster," and "the true Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke." Hence the allusion of Greene has been thought confirmatory of the suspicion that he, or some of his friends, had written one, at least, of these tragedies; and that Shakespear, *more suo*, had adapted them to the stage. This may very well have been the case; and it is also probable that Greene may allude to another fable of his, which the bard of Avon dramatised. "The Winter's Tale" is entirely founded on "Pandosto, or the Triumph of Time," which Greene published in 1588. Whether this writer *invented* the tale, as his last biographer believes, or whether, as we suspect, he was indebted for it to an Italian original, is little to the purpose: sufficient is the fact, that the play scrupulously follows the tale, — so closely, indeed, as to

make Bohemia a maritime country, and vessels to reach the capital. But this is not all: sixteen, at least, of the dramas ascribed to Shakespear are, beyond all question, derived from more ancient pieces.

There is reason to believe, that Shakespear was by no means pleased with the epithet, "the upstart crow." Henry Chettle, the editor of Greene's "Groat'sworth of Wit," alludes to the dissatisfaction of two writers of the stage on account of the letter: they were angry with Chettle for inserting it; and they appear to have suspected that he had some part in its composition. In the preface to his "Kind Hart's Dreame," he thus vindicates himself from the charge: — "About three months since died Mr. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry booksellers' hands; among others his 'Groat'sworth of Wit,' in which a letter, written to divers play-makers, is offensively by one or two of them taken. And because on the dead they cannot be revenged, they wilfully forge in their conceits a living writer; and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy but it must light upon me. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them (Marlowe) I care not if I never be. The other (Shakespear), whom at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had; for that as I have moderated the hate of living writers, and might have used my own discretion (especially in such a case, the author being dead), that I did not, I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault; because myself have seen his (Shakespear's) demeanour, no less civil than he excellent in the qualities he professes. Besides, divers of worship have repeated his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art." The genius of Shakespear cannot be injured by the fact we have stated, — that for his plots he was so deeply indebted to his predecessors. This consideration, however, in justice to them, must have its weight. It proves, that though he was the greatest

dramatist of his country, he must no longer be regarded as the creator of the English stage.

Greene was scarcely cold in his grave, when Dr. Gabriel Harvey, the friend of Spenser, vented pitiful spite on his memory. He had, in a sarcasm of a few lines, somewhat intemperately, as well as unjustifiably, assailed Harvey and his brothers, and — unpardonable offence! — had reported them as the sons of a *rope-maker*. Gabriel could not bear this degradation; and he answered in a torrent of abuse too gross for notice. Into this warfare — for Harvey was answered by Nash, the friend of Greene — we will not enter. We have sufficiently dwelt on the crimes of Greene, and we need not aggravate them by the envenomed malignity of the assailant. If the poet had many grievous vices, — if his life was one tissue of immorality, — we may surely doubt whether his heart was half so bad as that of the pharisaical doctor. He whose enmity reaches beyond the tomb,—who is so far destitute, not merely of Christian charity, but of common decency, as to trample on the ashes of the dead, — must be regarded with unmingled disgust.

Greene wrote copiously in prose: the titles indeed of his pieces are too numerous to be transcribed in the present sketch *, which is intended to represent him chiefly as a dramatist. We may, however, observe, that, though his fictions are remarkable for invention, they would not suit the taste of the present age. They are evidently very hasty productions; they are jejune, tedious, unnatural, uninstructive.

Though Greene wrote a considerable number of dramas, five only that can be called undoubtedly his have descended to our times, and of one even among these he was only the joint author. The greater portion were probably never published: some that were, might, as is generally supposed, have perished in the

* They are enumerated in Mr. Dyer's edition of Greene's Works, vol. i.

great fire of London ; and of those which escaped that catastrophe, some may have been destroyed more recently.

The History of Orlando Furioso was probably the earliest of Greene's dramatic productions. It is founded on the well-known Italian poem of that name; but great as are the incongruities of that poem, the play is still more distinguished for them. Angelica is made to be the daughter of Marsillius, emperor of Africa. Charlemagne and Arthur are represented as contemporary, and we are introduced to a Soldan of Egypt, (who, however, has Babylon for his capital,) a king of Cuba, a king of Mexico and other personages, equally contemporary with them. The sovereigns of Mexico and Cuba are profoundly versed in the mythology of Greece and Rome, which they display in every speech. Profane and sacred, pagan and Christian things, are blended in the most glorious confusion; and the geography may fitly be compared with the chronology. Here is a strange instance:

> " For Charlemagne the Great is up in arms,
> And Arthur, with a crew of Briton's arms,
> To seek for Medor and Angelica."

Though the characters of the piece are generally represented as pagans of the old classical school — a somewhat odd conceit for Charlemagne and his twelve peers — we have frequent mention of churches and palaces. The geographical blunders are still worse. He brings the twelve peers from France to the court of Marsillius, the African emperor, by a strange rout:

" *Ogier.*

> " Brave peers of France! Sith we have pass'd the bounds
> Whereby the wrangling billows seek for straits
> To war with Tellus, and her fruitful mines;
> Sith we have furrow'd through those wandering tides
> Of Tyrrhene seas, and made our galleys dance
> Upon the Hyperborean billow's crests,
> That braves with streams the watery occident,

And found the rich and wealthy Indian clime,
Sought to by greedy minds for hostile gold:
Now let us seek to venge the lamp of France,
That lately was eclipsed in Angelica;
Now let us seek Orlando forth, our peer,
Though from his former wits lately estrang'd
Yet famous in our favours as before.
And, sith by chance we all encounter'd be,
Let 's seek revenge on her that wrought his wrong."

All this arming of the knights of two great realms, Arthur's and Charlemagne's, and all this voyaging, was to discover and to kill one poor woman, Angelica, because, through her faithlessness, Orlando was stark mad! The following is another precious instance of geographical blundering:

" And I, my lord, am Mandricard of Mexico,
Whose climate, fairer than *Tyberius*,
Seated beyond the sea of Tripoly,
And richer than the *plot Hesperides*."

By Tyberius, we suppose Iberia is meant. But making Hesperides the name of a place, as is done in another of Greene's comedies, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, —

" Whereon the fearful dragon held his seat,
That watch'd the garden called *Hesperides*," —

must surprise us when we remember that Greene ostentatiously subscribed himself "Maister of Arts in both universities," and "Utriusque Academiæ Magister." If he were a fair sample of collegiate attainments in England, at this period, they must assuredly have been lower in character than our rural grammar schools of the present day. He abounds with blunders of every description, some even greater than that in which Shakespear copied him, and in which he made Bohemia a maritime country. The truth is, he was deplorably ignorant; and we are surprised, greatly surprised, that any university, much less both Oxford and Cambridge, should have honoured such a man with a degree.

Greene was accused, probably with great justice, of selling this precious drama twice over. "Master Robert Greene," asks the author of the *Defence of Coney-catching*, "would it not make you blush if you sold *Orlando Furioso* to the queen's players for twenty rubles, and when they were in the country, sold the same play to the lord admiral's men for as much more? Was not this plain coney-catching, R. G.?" Such trifles as this were not likely to be considered heinous by one who kept the sister, and was the boon companion, of the infamous Cutting Ball.

"*A Looking-glass for London and England*" was the joint production of Greene and Lodge. It is no less contemptible than the preceding. It is filled with the same precious absurdities; and though it has less bombast, it has not one good paragraph from beginning to end. Yet it was amazingly popular. This was owing to the representation of a whale which spewed Jonah from its mouth, to the huge delight of the citizens.

The third drama of Greene, "*The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*," is entirely founded on the well-known tract, (lately reprinted), "*The Famous History of Friar Bacon.*" One character — of Margaret, the fair maid of Fressingfield — is original; at least it is not derived from the pamphlet; but we know not that the creation — if such it be — is likely to interest the reader. This has been called "the most pleasing of all his (Greene's) dramas." It is a tissue of incongruities. The lowest characters in the piece, — the uneducated English farmers and the fair maid herself, are perpetually alluding to the classic fables of antiquity. Its blunders, geographical and historical, are many; and it exhibits no boldness of invention, or vigour of language, to render an analysis desirable to any reader.

"*The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Arragon*," is entirely filled with bombast, with puerile conceits, with monstrous absurdities; and is by far the worst

of all the pieces left by the mediocre writer. We have perused it throughout, but sure we are that nobody will imitate us.

"*The Scottish History of James the Fourth, slain at Flodden,*" is the best of the dramas we shall have to notice; for though "*George a Green, the Pinner of Wakefield,*" has been ascribed to the same writer, there is no evidence for the paternity. "*James the Fourth*" is the best, or we should rather say, the most tolerable, of Greene's performances. It is founded partly on history, and chiefly on romance; and there can be no doubt that Greene, who never invented his fables, was indebted for it to some legend now lost. We give a very brief analysis of the plot.

The scene is laid in Scotland, whose king is married to *Dorothea*, daughter of "*the English King.*" He promises to his royal father-in-law at parting all due love to his fair bride; yet his heart is placed on one of his subjects, *Ida*, daughter of the countess of Arran. As this lady's virtue equals her beauty, he knows not how to compass his end, when he is accosted by Ateukin, an astrologer, who engages to compass it for him. The astrologer, however, is not more successful than the master; Ida will not listen to either; she will do no injury to the good queen, and she will not sully her own good fame. The king is soon unpopular; he disgusts his nobles by giving his confidence to adventurers of mean birth and no principle; he offends the good by scouting their admonitions. The earls of Douglas and Murton, and the bishop of St. Andrews, meet and complain of the state of the commonweal:—

"Like to a ship upon the ocean seas,
Tost in the doubtful stream, without a helm,
Such is a monarch without good advice."

They are beheld by the queen, who thinks their consultation portentous; and whatever the uneasiness she may feel at the king's conduct towards her, she utters no complaint; nay, such are her tenderness and her

notions of a wife's duty, that she will not allow others to censure him, but will apologise even for his worst vices. The following dialogue is written in a manner much superior to the usual one of Greene: —

"*Bishop of St. Andrews.*

"As fortune, mighty princess, reareth some
To high estate and place in commonweal,
So by divine bequest to them is lent
A riper judgment, and more searching eye,
Whereby they may discern the common harm;
For where importunes in the world are most,
Where all our profits rise, and still encrease,
There is our mind, thereon we meditate,
And what we do partake of good advice,
That we employ for to concern the same.
To this intent, these nobles and myself,
That are, or should be, eyes of commonweal,
Seeing his Highness' reckless course of youth —
His lawless and unbridled vein in love —
His too intentive trust to flatterers —
His abject care of counsel and his friends —
Cannot but grieve: and, since we cannot draw
His eye or judgment to discern his faults,
Since we have spoke, and counsel is not heard,
I, for my part, — let others as they list, —
Will leave the court, and leave him to his will,
Lest, with a ruthful eye, I should behold
His overthrow, which, sore I fear, is nigh.

"*Dorothea.*

"Ah! father, are you so estranged from love,
From due allegiance to your prince and land,
To leave your king when most he needs your help?
The thrifty husbandmen are never wont,
That see their lands unfruitful, to forsake them;
But, when the mould is barren and unapt,
They toil, they plough, and make the fallow fat.
The pilot in the dangerous sea is known:
In calmer waves the silly sailor strives.
Are you not members, lords, of commonweal?
And can your head, your dear anointed king,
Default ye, lords, except yourselves do fail?
Oh! stay your steps, return and counsel him!

"*Douglas.*

"Men seek not moss upon a rolling stone,

Or water from the sieve, or fire from ice,
Or comfort from a reckless monarch's hands.
Madam, he sets us light, that served in court,
In place of credit, in his father's days:
If we but enter presence of his grace,
Our payment is a frown, a scoff, a frump;
Whilst flattering Gnatho pranks it by his side;
Soothing the careless king in his misdeeds:
And if your grace consider your estate,
His life should urge you too, if all be true.

" *Dorothea.*

" Why, Douglas, why?

" *Douglas.*

" As if you have not heard
His lawless love to Ida grown of late,
His careless estimate of your estate.

" *Dorothea.*

" Ah! Douglas, thou misconstr'est his intent!
He doth but tempt his wife: he tries my love.
This injury pertains to me, not to you.
The king is young, and if he step awry,
He may amend, and I will love him still.
Should we disdain our vines, because they sprout
Before their time? or young men, if they strain
Beyond their reach? No; vines that bloom and spread,
Do promise fruits; and young men that are wild,
In age grow wise. My friends, and Scottish peers,
If that an English princess may prevail,
Stay, stay with him! Lo! now my zealous prayer
Is plead with tears! Fie, peers, will you hence?

" *Bishop of St. Andrews.*

" Madam, 't is virtue in your grace to plead;
But we, that see his vain, untoward course,
Cannot but fly the fire before it burns,
And shun the court before we see his fall.

" *Dorothea.*

" Will you not stay? Then, lordlings, fare you well.
Though you forsake your king, the heavens, I hope,
Will favour him, through mine incessant prayer."

There is something exceedingly interesting in the

character of this lady; she is the very model of silent uncomplaining suffering; she is a fine delicate creature, but doubtless some of the features are derived from an historic original — Margaret, sister of our Henry VIII. The virtues of that princess, notwithstanding the neglect of her husband, were the theme of contemporary panegyric.

In the mean time the nobles leave the court, and the astrologer Ateukin becomes the royal confidant. His game, however, is a dangerous one. He has engaged to win the lovely Ida for the king; and if he fail, he has only to expect the vengeance of his patron. And what but failure is to be expected, considering the virtue of the lady? The astrologer even discovers this; and to remove the only obstacle which, in his opinion, intervenes between the king and the fruition of his wishes, he becomes hardy enough to counsel the death of Dorothea, that Ida may share the throne of Scotland. James consents, a Frenchman named Jacques is selected for the deed; and a royal warrant is delivered to Ateukin, guaranteeing the pardon of the murderer. The important document, however, being stolen from the pocket of the favourite, passes into the hands of sir Bertram, one of the queen's friends, and shown to her. At first she is unwilling to believe that the order for her death has really been given; and when convinced of the fact, she has no rage, no revenge; all her tenderness revives; all her anxiety is for her worthless husband.

"What should I do? ah! poor unhappy queen,
Born to endure what fortune can contain!
Alas! the deed is too apparent now.
But, O mine eyes! were you as bent to hide,
As my poor heart is forward to forgive,
Ah! cruel king, my love would thee acquit.
Oh! what avails to be allied and match'd
With estates, that marry but in show?
Were I baser borne, my high estate
Could warrant me from this impendent harm:
But to be great and happy; these are the aim.
Ah! Ross, what shall I do? How shall I work?

" *Ross.*

" With speedy letters to your father send,
Who will revenge you, and defend your right.

" *Dorothea.*

" As if they kill not me who with him fight!
As, if his breast be touched, I am not wounded!
As, if he wailed, my joys were not confounded!
We are one heart, though rent by hate in twain;
One soul, one essence, doth our weal contain.
What then can conquer him that kills not me?"

At length she is reluctantly persuaded to flee, in male apparel, escorted by her dwarf. She is soon missed by Jacques, is pursued, overtaken in a wood, and, though disguised, easily recognised by the assassin, who runs his sword into her and leaves her for dead. The intelligence is borne to the king, who at first betrays some emotion, on account both of the crime itself, and of the consequences which it may produce. He has, however, a comforter in the man who has instigated him to his deed of blood: —

" *Ateukin.*

" Why, prince, it is no murder in a king
To end another's life to [illegible] his own;
For [illegible]ou are not as [illegible] non people be,
Who [illegible] and perish with a few men's tears.
But, if you [illegible]l, the state doth whole default,
The realm is rent in twain, in such a loss.
And Aristotle holdeth this for true,
Of evils needs we [illegible] choose the least.
Then better were it that a woman died,
Than all the half of Scotland should be blent.
'T is policy, my liege, in every state
To cut off members that disturb the head:
And, by corruption generation grows,
And contraries maintain the world and state.

" *King of Scots.*

" Enough, I am confirmed. Ateukin, come,
Rid me of love, and rid me of my grief;
Drive thou the tyrant from this tainted breast;
Then may I triumph in the height of joy.
Go to mine Ida, tell her that I vow
To raise her head, and make her honours great.

Go to mine Ida; tell her that her hair
Shall be embellished with orient pearls,
And crowns of sapphires compassing her brows
Shall war with those sweet beauties of her eyes!
Go to mine Ida; tell her that my soul
Shall keep her semblance closed in my breast;
And I, in touching of her milkwhite mould,
Will think me deified in such a grace."

Now comes the hour of retribution. Ateukin proceeds to Ida's house, and finds that she was married the day before to an English knight. His consternation may readily be conceived. Nor is this the worst: the Scottish nobles rebel; the English king, with a large army, marches to the border to exact revenge for the murder of his daughter, and nowhere meets with opposition. The Scottish monarch arms and stands ready for defence. As yet, however, he is unacquainted with the marriage of Ida, and with another fact, the flight of his astrologer.

"'Twixt love and fear, continued are the wars:
The one assures me of my Ida's love,
The other moves me for my murdered queen.
Thus find I grief of that whereon I joy,
And doubt in greatest hope, and death in weal.
Alas! what hell may be compared with mine,
Since in extremes my comforts do consist?
War, then, will cease, when dead ones are revived;
Some then will yield, when I am dead for hope."

Here one of his low dependants enters, evidently the bearer of ill news; and, in reply to his eager inquiries, tells him that Ida is married and the astrologer fled. Then, indeed, he begins to feel the reverse bitter: —

How have the partial heavens then dealt with me;
Boding my weal for to abase my power!
Alas! what thronging thoughts do me oppress!
Injurious love is partial in my right,
And flattering tongues, by whom I was misled,
Have laid a snare to spoil my state and me.
Methinks I hear my Dorothea's ghost
Howling revenge for my accursed hate.

The ghosts of those my subjects that are slain
Pursue me, crying out, Woe, woe, to lust!
The foe pursues me at my palace door,
He breaks my rest, and spoils me in my camp."

In the meantime the English monarch approaches, demands an interview with his son-in-law, and threatens him with speedy destruction. The two armies close; but at this eventful moment a knight, attended by two ladies and a dwarf, arrives, and beseeches both kings to stay their forces: when asked why, he exhibits, in one of the ladies, queen Dorothea, whom he himself had found in the woods bleeding, whom his care and that of his lady (the other female) had recovered. Here, again, the queen is true to her character; she is the first to beseech pardon and oblivion, to intercede with her father for her husband: —

" *King of Scots.*
" Durst I presume to look upon those eyes,
Which I have tired with a world of woes?
Or did I think submission were enough,
Or sighs might make an entrance to my soul,
Yon heavens! you know how willing I would weep;
Yon heavens can tell how glad I would submit;
Yon heavens can say how firmly I would sigh!

" *Dorothea.*
" Shame me not, prince, companion in thy bed:
Youth hath misled, — tut, but a little fault;
'T is kingly to amend what is amiss.
Might I, with twice as many pains as these,
Unite our hearts, then should my wedded lord
See how incessant labours I would take.
My gracious father, govern your affects:
Give me that hand, that oft hath blessed this head,
And clasp thine arms, that have embraced this neck,
About the shoulders of my wedded spouse.
Ah! mighty prince, this king and I are one;
Spoil thou his subjects, thou despoilest me,
Touch thou his breast, thou dost attaint this heart;
Oh! be my father then in loving him!

" *King of England.*
" Thou provident, kind mother of increase,
Thou must prevail? ah! Nature, thou must rule!

Hold, daughter; join my hand and his in one;
I will embrace him for to favour thee:
I call him friend, and take him for my son."

The wife and father are very easily reconciled, — much too easily for the occasion. But though in this and in many other respects the piece is exceedingly unnatural, — filled with improbabilities, — it has, when compared with the other productions of the age, considerable merit. We must not forget that Shakespear was, as yet, scarcely known; that he had laid no claim to invention, had given no proof of the genius which was so soon to astonish the world; that his dramas were imitations of ancient pieces; and that, though they had more art, more stage effect, they had little of novelty to recommend them. With this consideration before us, we shall not hesitate to repeat that this drama is a respectable production.

But we must leave Greene as a dramatist. The only piece which we can praise is the one we have just analysed. The rest are deserving of oblivion only.

As a poet merely, whether lyric or elegiac, Greene has some claim to our respect. Unfortunately, however, he has so much of the mannerism of queen Elizabeth's reign, — at least of the latter portion of her reign, — he is so remarkable for laborious trifling, for strained metaphors, for puerile effusions of love, that he can afford no reader of taste at the present day much satisfaction. On a careful inspection of his minor compositions, we do not perceive one which we should be thanked for extracting.

Of Greene we may well say, in the words of a living writer*, "He was a poet who obtained an extraordinary reputation at a comparatively easy rate." In his novels, his pamphlets, his dramas, his minor poems, he is full of affectation. He was evidently spoiled by Lily, the elaborate trifler, known chiefly as the author of "Euphues." He has no simplicity, and his pedantry

* Mr. Collier.

is to be seen in his classical allusions, few of which have any propriety to recommend them. He had neither taste nor discretion, neither imagination nor feeling. He has, however, many elegant verses, many pretty fancies, and great facility of expression. A German critic of some note says of him, that he had "a happy talent, a clear spirit, and a lively imagination;" qualities which, the same writer assures us, "characterise all his writings." We have looked in vain for these qualities; and if the reader have discovered them, he has been more fortunate than ourselves.

To some readers it may appear that we have given more space to this dramatist than he deserves. Let it, however, be remembered that our object is the age rather than the man. Besides, independent of his literary pretensions, Greene's personal history contains something striking, — perhaps instructive.

10. *Christopher Marlowe* (died 1593).* — The time of this writer's birth cannot be ascertained. We can only infer it from the fact that, in 1583, he took his bachelor's degree at Cambridge, when we may reasonably suppose that he could not have passed his twentieth, or even his eighteenth year. The facts of his life, too, are exceedingly meagre. When we say that he came to London to earn his subsistence by the pen; that he was a dramatic writer of high reputation, perhaps, too, an actor; that, after an interval of ten years, he met with a tragical fate; we have little more to record respecting him. If, however, those facts afford little scope for remark, the case is otherwise in respect to his character. *It* has been the subject of much praise and of much vituperation; — the one embracing his intellect, the other his morals. "That elemental wit, Kit Marlowe," is the expression of one contemporary, Nash, speaking of his *Hero and Leander*, adds, "Of

* The materials of Marlowe's life are derived from Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary; from Dyce's edition of his works; from Brand's Theatre of God's Judgments; from Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry; and many other sources.

whom divine Musæus sung, and a diviner muse than he, Kit Marlowe." The diminutive, however, does not argue much for his dignity:

> "Marlowe, renown'd for his rare art and wit,
> Could ne'er attain beyond the name of Kit."

is the expression of Thomas Heywood.* But if there be any weight in contemporary authority, he had worse things than want of dignity. He is charged with atheism and unbridled licentiousness. In what degree the former charge is true, we have not the means of ascertaining. By one author † he is said to have denied God, to have declared Christ an impostor, to have ridiculed the Trinity; and this not merely in conversation, but in writing. By another ‡ the awful accusation is confirmed, in the assertion that, according to report, "he wrote a book against the Trinity." It is possible that common report may here have exaggerated; that he had merely doubts on the subject of the Trinity, and of revelation in general: assuredly we are unwilling to believe that his infidelity extended so far as to deny the existence of a God. Yet the language of his contemporaries is a stubborn thing; and charity can only hope that there has been an exaggeration. Certainly Marlowe had the reputation of being an infidel. There can, we think, be no doubt that the memorable words of Greene, in his posthumous work, the *Groatsworth of Wit* §, refer to him: "Wonder not, thou famous gracer of tragedians, that Greene (who has said with thee, like the fool, in his heart, *There is no God,*) should now give glory to His greatness, — for penetrating is His power, — His hand is heavy upon me. — The broacher of this diabolical atheism is dead — and wilt thou, my friend, be his disciple?" That Marlowe was not pleased with the address, may, perhaps, justify the inference, that his infidelity extended only to some loose conversation; that it was greatly exaggerated. On this subject the reader must judge for himself.

* Son of the celebrated dramatist of the name.
† Thomas Brand, in his "Theatre of God's Judgments."
‡ William Vaughan, in "The Golden Grene."
§ See the Sketch of Greece.

Whatever be thought of Marlowe's infidelity, we certainly cannot doubt of his licentiousness or of his tragical end. The one led to the other. It was in a tavern at Deptford that the dagger of a pimp deprived him of life. The register in the parish church of St. Nicholas has this melancholy entry: "1st June, 1593, Christopher Marlowe slain by Francis Archer." The circumstances attending the catastrophe may be collected from contemporary writers. "As the poet Lycophron," says one, five years only after the event*, "was shot to death by a rival of his, so Marlowe was stabbed to death by a bawdy serving man, a rival of his lewd love." Another, who wrote seven years after the act†, is more explicit: "Christopher Marlowe, by profession a play-maker, who, as it is reported, about fourteen years ago wrote a book against the Trinity. But see the effects of God's justice! It so happened, that at Deptford, a little village about three miles distant from London, as he meant to stab with his poignard one named Ingram (Archer) that had invited him thither to a feast, and was then playing at tabbs; he (Archer) quickly perceiving it, so avoided the thrust that, withall drawing out his dagger for his own defence, he stabbed this Marlowe into the eye in such sort, that his brains coming out at the dagger's point, he shortly after died." Whether the reflection with which the relation is concluded—"Thus did God, the true executioner of divine justice, work the end of impious atheists"—be a just one, we at least shall not venture to decide. Though the death of Marlowe was awful, — the infidelity which preceded it more awful still — though there might be retributive justice in the catastrophe (and far are we from saying that there was *not*) we should sometimes do well to remember the beautiful sentiment of our great moral poet: —

> "Let not this weak unknowing hand
> Presume thy bolts to throw;
> And deal damnation round the land
> On each I judge thy foe!"

* Francis Meres, in his "Wit's Treasury," 8vo. 1598.
† William Vaughan, in "The Golden Grene," A.D. 1600.

The Omniscient alone can say whether the infidelity of Marlowe was so great as is represented; and if it were, whether his fate on earth was its destined penalty.*

The extant dramas of Marlowe are five; — the two parts of *Tamburlaine the Great* — *The Massacre of Paris* — *The Jew of Malta* — *Edward the Second* — and *Faustus*. With Nash he also composed the tragedy of *Dido*; and it has been supposed that he was the author of *Lust's Dominion*; but this was the production of several writers, amongst whom he is not to be ranked. As the *Massacre of Paris* is a mere abortion, and as it is impossible to distinguish what he contributed to *Dido*, we shall restrict our observations to the remaining four. That he wrote many more is unquestionable; but we can deal with those only which time has spared.

Of *Tamburlaine the Great* we do not feel disposed to speak at length.† That it was amazingly popular we all know; but popularity *per se* is no criterion of

* The puritans of the seventeenth, like their descendants of the nineteenth century, were not much influenced by the catholic spirit of the poet. Their hero, Thomas Brand, a noted zealot, relates the catastrophe of unhappy Marlowe:—

"Not inferior to any of the former in atheism and impiety, and equal to all in manner of punishment, was one of our own nation of fresh and late memory, called Marlowe, by profession a scholar, brought up from his youth in the University of Cambridge, but by practice a play-maker, and a poet of scurrility, who, by giving too large a swing to his own wit, and suffering his lust to have the full reins, fell (not without just desert) to that great outrage and extremity, that he denied God and his son (Christ, and not only in word blasphemed the Trinity, but also (as it is credibly reported) wrote books against it, affirming our Saviour to be a deceiver, and Moses but to be a seducer of the people, and the Holy Bible to be but vain and idle stories, and all religion but a device of policy. But see what a hook the Lord put in the nostrils of this barking dog: so it fell out, that as he purposed to stab one whom he ought a grudge unto with his dagger; the other party perceiving, so avoided the stroke, that withal catching the wrist, he stabbed his own dagger into his own head, in such sort, that notwithstanding all the means of surgery that could be brought, he shortly after died thereof; the manner of his death being so terrible, (for he even cursed and blasphemed to his last gasp, and together with his breath an oath flew out of his mouth,) that it was not only a manifest sign of God's judgment, but also an horrible and fearful terror to behold him. But herein did the justice of God most notably appear, in that he compelled his own hand, which had written those blasphemies, to be the instrument to punish him, and that in his brain which had devised the same."—*Theatre of God's Judgments*, p 92

† The last editor of Marlowe (Mr. Dyce) would fain have some other writer the author of Tamburlaine. Mr. Collier, however, (History of Dramatic Poetry, vol. iii. p. 112.) has left no room for doubt.

merit. To the vulgar, bombast is more acceptable than sobriety, fustian than reason or experience. Never was bombast, never was fustian, more common than in this drama. Take a few examples, which may serve to illustrate at once the age and the man.

After his conquest of the soldan of Egypt, Tamburlaine endeavours to console the vanquished monarch by representing himself as irresistible both to gods and

" 'T was *I*, my lord, that got the victory —
The God of War resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make me general of the world.
Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.
Where'er I come, the fatal sisters sweat;
And grisly death, by running to and fro
To do their ceaseless homage to my sword."

The mention of Mars, of Jove, and of the fatal sisters, must seem odd in the mouth of a zealous mussulman like Tamerlaine; but Ben Jonson was the first that brought learning in aid of the buskined muse.

Tamerlaine is much attached to his queen Xenocrate, whom, however, not all his power, — favourite of heaven though he be, — can save from death. She is on the bed from which, alive, she must never more descend; and he, seated by her side, thus expresses the sympathy of earth and heaven with the event: —

" Black is the beauty of the brightest day:
The golden ball of Heaven's eternal fire,
That danced with glory on the silver waves,
Now wants the fuel that inflamed his beams;
And all with faintness, and for foul disgrace,
He binds his temples with a frowning cloud,
Ready to darken earth with endless night.
Zenocrate, that give him light and life,
Whose eyes shot fire from their ivory bowers,
And temper'd every soul with lively heat,
Now, by the malice of the angry skies,
Whose jealousy admits no second mate,
Draws in the comfort of her latest breath,

All dazzled with the hellish mists of death.
Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven,
As centinels to warn th' immortal souls
To entertain divine Zenocrate.
Apollo, Cynthia, and the ceaseless lamps
That gently look'd upon the loathsome earth,
Shine downward now no more, but deck the heavens
To entertain divine Zenocrate.
The crystal spring, whose taste illuminates
Refined eyes with an eternal sight,
Like tried silver, runs through Paradise
To entertain divine Zenocrate.
The cherubims and holy seraphims,
That sing and play before the King of Kings,
Use all their voices and their instruments
To entertain divine Zenocrate.
And in this sweet and curious harmony,
The God that tunes this music to our souls,
Holds out his hand in highest majesty
To entertain divine Zenocrate.
Then let some holy trance convey my thoughts
Up to the palace of th' empyreal heav'n,
That this my life may be as short to me
As are the days of sweet Zenocrate."

The above, it may be thought, cannot easily be paralleled for ranting absurdity; but, on perceiving that she is dead, he greatly surpasses it: —

"What! is she dead? Techelles, draw thy sword
And wound the earth, that it may cleave in twain,
And we descend into th' infernal vaults
To hale the fatal sisters by the hair,
And throw them in the triple moat of hell,
For taking hence my fair Zenocrate.
Casane and Theridamas, to arms!
Raise cavalieros higher than the clouds,
And with the cannon break the frame of heav'n;
Batter the shining palace of the sun,
And shiver all the starry firmament:
For am'rous Jove hath snatch'd my love from hence,
Meaning to make her stately queen of heaven!
What god soever holds thee in his arms,
Giving thee nectar and ambrosia,
Behold me here, divine Zenocrate,
Raving, impatient, desperate, and mad,

Breaking my steeled lance, with which I burst
The rusty beams of Janus' temple doors,
Letting out death and tyrannizing war,
To march with me under this bloody flag!
And if thou pitiest Tamburlane the Great,
Come down from heaven, and live with me again."

But when Timour's own end approaches, even this bombast and raving dwindle into insignificance. He feels himself suddenly indisposed, and he exclaims —

"What daring god torments my body thus,
And seeks to conquer mighty Tamburlane?
Shall sickness prove me now to be a man,
That have been term'd the terror of the world?
Techelles, and the rest, come take your swords,
And threaten him whose hand afflicts my soul.
Come, let us march against the powers of heav'n,
And set black streamers in the firmament,
To signify the slaughter of the gods.
Ah, friends, what shall I do? I cannot stand.
Come, carry me to war against the gods
That envy thus the health of Tamburlane.

"*Theridamas.*

"Ah, good my lord, leave these impatient words,
Which adds much danger to your malady.

"*Tamburlane.*

"Why, shal sit and languish in this pain?
No; strike the drums, and in revenge of this,
Come, let us charge our spears, and pierce his breast
Whose shoulders bear the axis of the world,
That if I perish, heaven and earth may fade.
Theridamas, haste to the court of Jove,
Will him to send Apollo with him straight
To cure me, or I'll fetch him down myself.

"*Techelles.*

"Sit still, my gracious lord; this grief will cease,
And cannot last, it is so violent.

"*Tamburlane.*

"Not last, Techelles? — No! for I shall die.
See where my slave, the ugly monster, death,
Shaking and quiv'ring, pale and wan for fear,
Stands aiming at me with his murd'ring dart,

Who flies away at every glance I give,
And, when I glance away, comes stealing on.
Villain, away, and hie thee to the field!
I and mine army come to load thy back
With souls of thousand mangled carcases.
Look, where he goes; but see, he comes again,
Because I stay: Techelles, let us march,
And weary death with bearing souls to hell."

Notwithstanding the absurdity of the images, there is something striking in the timid approach of Death, which, monarch of all below, dare not openly hurl his dart at the mighty Scourge of God. Why Marlowe, a man of genius, should have chosen thus to outrage all reason, all taste, all human experience, all common sense, we should vainly inquire. The most that can be said in his justification — and it is very little — is, that the audience were fond of extravagance, and that, for the sake of winning their favour, he stooped to what he condemned. This is matter of regret. Certainly he was capable of greater things. Not only the brilliancy of his misdirected fancy, but the harmony, the elegance, in some instances the splendour, of his versification must already have struck the reader. Compare them with whatever of the kind previously existed in our language, and his amazing superiority will at once be visible. To him was Shakespear, beyond all doubt, indebted as a model of blank verse, — a measure which Marlowe carried very nearly to perfection.

The Massacre of Paris, as we have before observed, is a mere abortion. It was composed, too, with no good purpose,—that of aggravating the fury of protestant animosity against their Roman catholic brethren. Hence the most improbable, the most monstrous, circumstances are invented to bring odium on a numerous party. In the reign of Elizabeth there required no such provocation to popular hatred. We cannot suppose that Marlowe cared for popular prejudices; that he valued either Roman catholic or protestant as such; but he well knew how to enlist the public sympathies in his behalf.—In

a similar spirit, viz. to bring odium on a whole race, he composed *The Jew of Malta*. In this production there is, undoubtedly, genius; but there is no probability, no connection of incidents, no truth of character. At this period, indeed, character was not understood: the public mind was not instructed sufficiently to relish, or even to perceive, the critical niceties that separate the individual from the species: invention was every thing; the incidents had only to be numerous and striking, and the vulgar taste was gratified. Such is *The Jew of Malta*, the murderous Barabbas. To render him perfectly odious, he is represented as always plotting or perpetrating the most heinous crimes. He is too great a monster for our sympathies; neither earth nor hell ever produced his like; and if such a character were *possible*, he would not, assuredly, boast of his villanies in such terms as these: —

" As for myself I walk abroad a nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls:
Sometimes I go about and poison wells,
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
I am content to lose some of my crowns;
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'em go pinion'd along by my door.
Being young I studied physick, and began
To practise first upon the Italian;
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in use
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells:
And after that was I an engineer,
And in the wars 'twixt France and Germany,
Under pretence of helping Charles the Fifth,
Slew friend and enemy with my stratagems.
Then after that was I an usurer,
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery,
I fill'd the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hung himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll,
How I with interest tormented him.
But mark how I am blest for plaguing them."

Edward the Second is a drama of great beauty: for the period it is really a phenomenon: certainly it has not been equalled by any writer of the sixteenth century, Shakespear only excepted; and we know not that it was much surpassed in the following. "It contains," says a living writer *, "an excellent portrait of the turbulent nobility of a semi-barbarous age, and the catastrophe is distinguished by a truth and pathos of the most affecting kind." In general it is remarkably faithful to history. We can, however, spare no room for an analysis of it; nor, as the works of Marlowe have been so recently published, need we.†

Doctor Faustus is a drama of a different character. It has less of invention, less elegance of versification. It has a defect still greater: the interest is, strangely enough, made to consist in the serious rather than the tremendous. Far, therefore, are we from subscribing to the opinion of Marlowe's last editor, that in it "he displays more vigour of imagination, and originality of conception, than in any other of his productions." When this high and very unmerited praise was bestowed, surely the editor must have forgotten the fact that the drama closely follows a popular romance of the same name. It is unworthy of Marlowe's reputation.

Marlowe, it has been supposed, wrote other plays than those we here record,— others even than those which time has not spared. He is positively said by Chalmers to have written *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, which Shakespear re-modelled, and transferred into one of the parts of Henry VI. Of this statement there is no proof, though there is some probability. He *may* also have written the history of *Henry the Sixth*, and *The Whole Contention between the Two famous Houses Lancaster and York*. All three were in existence before Shakespear began to write for the stage; and his additions are few. As, however, we can never ascertain whether Marlowe was, or was not, the author of these

* Mr. Dyce.
† Three vols. small 8vo. London. Pickering, 1836.

dramas, we will not fatigue the reader by useless speculation.

Marlowe was an elegiac as well as a tragic poet. But in this department he was a translator rather than an original writer. He has rendered with some felicity the first book of Lucan, and, unfortunately for his moral fame, many of Ovid's Amours. He is so literal, that his book was burned in 1599, by the public hangman, at the command of the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London.*

It is impossible to dismiss the works of Marlowe, without feeling some regret for his premature fate. Had he lived the ordinary term of men's career, he would doubtless have done much to elevate the English stage. But even with this disadvantage, the stage is more indebted to him than to any other writer, Shakespear only excepted. Nor must it be concealed that the bard of Avon, by having such a model before him,—one unknown to former ages,—was enabled to surpass all his predecessors. Popular as is the opinion that he created the English stage, none can be less just: he merely *reformed* it. This, if our limits would allow us, we could easily illustrate by passages from contemporary dramatists; but the instances which we have already adduced, must suffice. He who would institute a minute comparison, may easily do so, since the materials are abundant, and not very difficult of access.

11. *Thomas Kyd.* †—Of this author little more is known, than that he died in 1595. But his name will not pass into oblivion. He is the author of two plays which created some sensation in their day, and which, even at this, will bear a perusal. *The First Part of Jeronimo* is much inferior to the second, which is known

* How could Mr. Dyce,—a clergyman of the established church,—insert these translations in his edition of Marlowe's works?

† For this brief notice of Kyd and his writings we are indebted to Hawkins's Origin of the English Drama; to the third volume of Dodsley's Old Plays, edit. 1825; to Gifford's Ben Jonson, vol. i.; to the Biographia Dramatica; to the third volume of Malone's Shakespear, by Boswell; and to Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry, vol. iii.

by the name of *The Spanish Tragedy;* yet it has some vigorous lines, and is not without character. By the latter performance must the merit of Kyd be judged. We must not, however, forget to observe that, after the author's death, some additions of greater value than the rest were made by no less a pen than Ben Jonson's. These have been carefully marked by the last editor of the play *; and every reader is thereby enabled to make the comparison.

The fable of this tragedy is not founded on history; it is entirely a creation, — though not, probably, a creation by Kyd, — and for this reason has defects, from which it would have been free, had it been derived from human experience. It has some mythological personages; it has ghosts; and it has a personification peculiar to our old morals, *Revenge.* The incidents, too, are very unnatural, and have no proper connection. Yet with all these defects, and no inconsiderable quantity of extravagance, there is much vigour, much even of originality, in the piece. We concur, to the fullest extent, in the praise bestowed on Kyd by a living writer.† "Kyd was a poet of very considerable mind, and deserves, in some respects, to be ranked above more notorious contemporaries. His thoughts are often both new and natural; and if, in his plays, he dealt largely in blood and death, he only partook of the habit of the times, in which good sense and discretion were often outraged for the purpose of gratifying the crowd. In taste he is inferior to Peele, but in force and character he is his superior; and if Kyd's blank verse be not so smooth, it has decidedly more spirit, vigour, and variety. As a writer of blank verse, I am inclined, among the predecessors of Shakespear, to give Kyd the next place to Marlowe."

Some resemblance between this play and the "Hamlet" of Shakespear has been discovered. In both, a ghost appears to urge revenge on the procrastinating relative; in both, there is a play within a play. In one respect, both are equally unnatural: surely earthly passions

* Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. iii. last edition.

† Mr. Collier.

slumber in the tomb. In these respects, a comparison between the two writers will indeed establish the amazing superiority of the bard of Avon; but it will also show that he was not so much of a creator as is generally supposed; that though he *could* create when he chose, he was frequently satisfied with improving the conceptions of his predecessors.

12. *George Peele**,—(1552—1598),—the reader will remember, as one of the poets to whom Greene addressed a portion of his impressive farewell letter: "And thou, no less deserving than the other two, (Marlowe and Lodge;) in some things rarer; in nothing inferior; driven (as myself) to extreme shifts, a little have I to say to thee," &c. Of his life we know little. He was entered on the books of Broadgates College (now Pembroke), Oxford, about the year 1560; but he had no degree until 1577. About 1580, he is supposed to have repaired to the metropolis, for the purpose of shining as a literary adventurer. Of his penury (the result, no doubt, of his dissipated habits), we may infer enough from the letter of Greene; of his vices, we need only observe that he fell a sacrifice to them. Indeed, from the character of his associates—Marlowe, Greene, Nash, and others—we could not expect much rectitude of conduct. If a tract, entitled *The meri conceited Jests of George Peele,* has, as we believe it has, any foundation in truth, he was unprincipled as well as vicious. Rejecting three fourths of the jests, — a strange term for acts of the grossest swindling, — as originally referring to some other persons, and applied to him merely from his superior celebrity, enough remain to have hanged him ten times over, had he lived in our days. Take one as a sample, and yet it is by no means the worst that might be selected:—

* This article is taken from Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss; from Campbell's Specimens of the British Poets; from Dodsley's Old Plays; from Hawkins's Origin of the English Drama; from Warton's History of English Poetry; from Mr. Dyce's edition of Peele's Dramatic Works; and from Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry.

"How George served his Hostess.

"George, lying at an old widow's house, and had gone so far on the score that his credit would stretch no farther; for she had made a vow not to depart with drink or victuals without ready money. Which George, seeing the fury of his froward hostess, in grief kept his chamber. At last he called to his hostess, and told her, she should understand that he was not without money, how poorly soever he appeared to her, and that my diet shall testify: in the mean time, good hostess, quoth he, send for such a friend of mine. She did. so his friend came; to whom George imparted his mind, the effect whereof was this, to pawn his cloak, hose, and doublet, unknown to his hostess: for, quoth George, this seven nights do I intend to keep my bed Truly he spake, for his intent was, the bed should not keep him any longer. Away goes he to pawn his apparel: George bespeaks good cheer for supper, which was no shamble-butcher's stuff, but according to the place; for his chamber being remote from the house, at the end of the garden, his apparel being gone, it appeared to him as the counter, therefore to comfort him he dealt in poultry. His friend brought the money, supped with him: his hostess he very liberally paid, but cavilled with her at her unkindness, vowing that while he lay there, none should attend him but his friend. The hostess replied, a God's name, she was well content with it: so was George too; for none knew better than himself what he intended. But in brief, thus he used his kind hostess. After his apparel and money were gone, he made bold with the feather bed he lay on, which his friend slily conveyed away, having as villanous a wolf in his belly as George, though not altogether so wise; for that feather bed they devoured in two days, feathers and all; which was no sooner digested, but away went the coverlet, sheets, and the blanket; and at the last dinner, when George's good friend perceiving nothing left but the bed-cords, as the devil would have it, straight came in his mind the fashion of a hatter, the foolish kind knave would needs fetch a quart of sack for his friend George; which sack to this day never saw vintner's cellar: and so he left George in a cold chamber, a thin shirt, a ravished bed, no comfort left him, but the bare bones of deceased capons. In this distress George bethought him of what he might do: nothing was left him: and as his eye wandered up and down the empty chamber, by chance he spied out an old armour, at which sight George was the joyfullest man in all Christendom; for the armour of Achilles, that Ulysses and Ajax strove for, was not more precious to them than this to him: for he presently claps it upon his back, the

halbert in his hand, the morion on his head; and so gets out the back way, marches from Shore-ditch to Clarkenwell, to the no small wonder of those spectators that beheld him. Being arrived at the wished haven he would be, an old acquaintance of his furnished him with an old suit, and an old cloak for his old armour. How the hostess looked when she saw that metamorphosis in her chamber, judge those bomborts that live by tapping, between the age of fifty and threescore."

The dramas of Peele are, 1. *The Arraignment of Paris,* which is characteristic of the age. It is a *pastoral* performance: — lovely shepherdesses and sighing swains were long the only favourites at Elizabeth' scourt, for whose gratification this unnatural piece was written. Its absurdity is heightened by the introduction of mythological personages; in fact, half the deities of Olympus, besides the inferior ones of the woods and streams, are made to figure in it. Fancy it certainly has; and it is not without some harmony of versification; but these qualities are a poor compensation for its radical defects. 2. *The Famous Chronick History of King Edward the First,* which has little to recommend it. It is extravagant enough, and in no respect true to history; nor can we agree with the last editor, that "the tragic portion is (even) occasionally written with power." 3. *The Battle of Alcazar,* which we at least think, from internal evidence, to be Peele's. It is full of rant and faction, yet it contains some good verses. The plot, however, is very poor; the incidents are unnatural; and the whole without interest. 4. *The Old Wive's Tale,* a wild piece, with much of the inventive, and more still of the unnatural. It deserves notice, chiefly from the opinion that Milton, in his *Comus,* was much indebted to it. There is certainly a similarity between some of the characters in both; but it would not, we think, be difficult to show that both writers might, that both probably did, draw from some common source. That source was the popular lore of the middle ages. — Legends very much resembling it we have seen in the literature of other countries. It will be read with some interest, from its evident antiquity; from its

bearing the impress of remote opinions and manners. 5. *David and Bathseba,* which is the best of all, and by which the merit of the author must be estimated.

As no reader is, or at least ought to be, unacquainted with the Scripture incidents relative to the connection of David with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, we shall not recapitulate them.—The lady is discovered at the bath, while David watches unseen above. She sings:—

"Come, gentle zephyr, trickt with those perfumes
That erst in Eden sweetened Adam's love,
And stroke my bosom with the silken fan:
This shade, sun-proof, is yet no proof for thee;
Thy body, smoother than this waveless spring,
And purer than the substance of the same,
Can creep through that his lances cannot pierce:
Thou, and thy sister, soft and sacred air,
Goddess of life and governess of health,
Keeps every fountain fresh and arbour sweet;
No brazen gate her passage can repulse,
Nor bushy thicket bar thy subtle breath.
Then deck thee with thy loose delightsome robes,
And on thy wings bring delicate perfumes,
To play the wantons with us through the leaves."

The admiration of the king is not less poetically described—and it is described, too, with a chasteness which Marlowe or Greene would never have imagined:—

"What tunes, what words, what looks, what wonders pierce
My soul, incensed with a sudden fire?
What tree, what shade, what spring, what paradise,
Enjoys the beauty of so fair a dame?
Fair Eva placed in perfect happiness,
Sending her praise-notes to the liberal heavens,
Struck with the accents of arch-angels' tunes,
Wrought not more pleasure to her husband's thoughts,
Than this fair woman's words and notes to mine.
May that sweet plain that bears her pleasant weight,
Be still enamelled with all-coloured flowers;
That precious fount bear sand of purest gold;
And, for the pebble, let the silver streams
That pierce earth's bowels to maintain the source,

Play upon rubies, sapphires, chrysolites;
The brims let be embraced with golden curls
Of moss that sleeps with sounds the waters make,
For joy to feed the fount with their recourse:
Let all the grass that beautifies her bower
Bear manna every morn instead of dew,
Or let the dew be sweeter far than that
That hangs, like chains of pearls, on Hermon hill,
Or balm which trickled from old Aaron's beard."

These extracts, it will be readily admitted, have merit of a high order. There is pathos, too, in the refusal of Bathsheba to become the concubine even of a king. Indeed, the poet would have us infer that no criminal intercourse took place between them; that after Uriah's death only did he, in scriptural language, "know her." However this be, it adds to the interest of the piece. Great delicacy is used in respect to another incident, which certainly has no connexion with the fate of David and Bathsheba, but which Peele (and he gives us, in addition, the "tragedy of Absalom") introduced: it is the horrible event that led to Thamar's dishonour, by her own brother Ammon. For this, great praise is due to the author, especially when we consider that the age was not one of purity. The despair of the princess, when spurned by her betrayer, is thus described:

"Whither, alas! ah, whither shall I fly
With folded arms and all-amazed soul?
Cast as was Eva from that glorious soil
(Where all delights sat bating wing'd with thoughts,
Ready to nestle in her naked breasts),
To bare and barren vales with floods made waste,
To desert woods and hills with lightning scorched,
With death, with hell, with shame, with horror sit;
There will I wander from my father's face,
There Absalom, my brother Absalom,
Sweet Absalom, shall hear his sister mourn;
There will I live with my windy sighs,
Night ravens and owls to rend my bloody side,
Which with a rusty weapon I will wound,
And make them passage to my panting heart.
Why talk'st thou, wretch, and leav'st the deed undone?

(*Enter Absalom.*)
Rend hair and garments, as thy heartis rent
With inward fury of a thousand griefs,
And scatter them by these unhallow'd doors,
To figure Ammon's restless cruelty,
And tragic spoil of Thamar's chastity."

There is some vigour in the curse which Shimei, in the day of the king's adversity, flung at the royal head.

"Oh that my bosom could by nature bear
A sea of poison, to be poured upon
His cursed head, that sacred balm hath graced,
And consecrated king of Israel!
Or, would my breath were made the smoke of hell,
Infected with the sighs of damned souls,
Or with the reeking of that serpent's gorge
That feeds on adders, toads, and venomous roots,
That, as I opened my revenging lips
To curse the shepherd for his tyranny,
My words might cast rank poison to his pores,
And make his swollen and rankling sinews crack
Like to the combat blows that break the clouds,
When Jove's stout champions fight with fire.
See, where he cometh that my soul abhors!
I have prepared my pocket full of stones
To cast at him, mingled with earth and dust,
Which, bursting with disdain, I greet him with.
Come forth, thou murderer, and wicked man;
The Lord hath brought upon thy cursed head
The guiltless blood of Saul, and all his sons,
Whose royal throne thy baseness hath usurped;
And, to revenge it deeply on thy soul,
The Lord hath given thy kingdom to thy son;
And he shall wreak the traitr'ous wrongs of Saul:
Even as thy sin hath still importun'd Heaven,
So shall thy murders and adultery
Be punished in the sight of Israel,
As thou deserv'st, with blood, and death, and hell.
Hence, murderer, hence!"

But we must close these extracts. *David and Bathsheba* is, as we need scarcely add, a drama of considerable beauty. With the praise of a living critic*, however, we cannot fully concur. "Nash calls him an atlas

* Thomas Campbell, Specimen of the early English Poets.

in poetry. Unless we make allowance for his antiquity, the expression will appear hyperbolical; but, with that allowance, we may justly cherish the memory of Peele as the oldest genuine dramatic poet of our language." This is inaccurate. Sackville is surely a dramatic poet; so, too, is Marlowe. Neither is there justice in the assertion, that "David and Bathseba is the earliest fountain of pathos and harmony in our dramatic poetry." There is harmony, at least, in Marlowe; and we know not that in pathos Peele is superior to Greene. His great excellence is sweetness of versification and delicacy of language: his imagery, too, is more natural than that of any preceding tragic poet.

Besides the five dramas we have mentioned, Peele wrote two entertainments for the amusement of the citizens. They are merely pageants, and though they have fancy to recommend them, they will not be read with the slightest interest.

13. *John Lyly**, (1553—1601) obtained more fame than his merits deserved, from the affectation which he introduced into the language of the period. His *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit*, and its continuation, *Euphues and his England*, had a prodigious vogue: to be unacquainted with the absurd mode of speech was as disgraceful in that day as ignorance of French would be in our own. Of the author's personal history we know little. He was born in the Weald of Kent, about 1553; for in 1569 he became a student of Magdalen, being, says Anthony à Wood, "sixteen or thereabouts." Four years afterwards he took his bachelor's degree; and somewhat earlier than the usual date, he proceeded master. What caused him to leave Oxford for the sister university, is unknown; we are vaguely informed that it was "some disgust;" but more probably it was some irregularity

* From Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss; from Blount's Censura Celebriorum Auctorum; from Baker's Biographia Dramatica; from Dodsley's Old Plays; from Payne Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry; and from Malone's Shakspear, by Banwell.

which called forth the displeasure of his superiors: he was certainly rusticated. From Cambridge he repaired to London, to subsist by his wits. The constant recurrence of such a circumstance has not made, in modern times, the impression it deserves. We ourselves have read of scores,—no doubt there were hundreds,—who in Elizabeth's reign were sure of finding literary employment in the metropolis. Of these, at least nine-tenths were connected with the stage. The inference deducible from the fact is striking: it proves that theatrical representations were encouraged, and therefore relished, in a far greater degree than they are at present, or, perhaps, have ever since been. There he wrote nine plays, besides other works, scarcely any of which have been reprinted in modern times.* Nor is this any great loss; for though Malone asserts that he "unquestionably makes a nearer approach to a just delineation of character and life" than any dramatist before Shakespear, he is one of the worst of his age. His *Alexander and Campespe* is the only one of his dramas in which there is any approach to character; and it is, therefore, the only one that we shall notice. †

This may, in some respects, be called an historical play. The personages are subjects of history; and most of the incidents are borrowed from the same source. After the conquest of Thebes by Alexander the Great, two female prisoners of great beauty are brought before him. He treats both with generosity; but more particularly *Campaspe*. He is soon in love with her, and he employs Apelles to draw her portrait. The

* Six of them were republished by Blount.

† The nine dramas are:—

1 Alexander and Campespe, first printed	1584
2 Endimion	1591
3 Sappho and Phaon	1591
4 Galatea	1592
5 Mydas	1592
6 Mother Bombie	1590
7 The Woman in the Moon	1597
8 The Maid, her Metamorphosis	1600
9 Love, his Metamorphosis	1601

The first six were republished by Blount, in 1632, under the title "Sixe Court Comedies."

painter is soon as much enslaved as the victor, and the lady herself soon feels the power of the same deity. That deity is a leveller; and her heart is lost, not to the lord of kingdoms, but to the poor artist. Of this fact Alexander is soon aware; but, after a few struggles within himself, he resigns her to his rival. Such is the main plot, and a meagre one it is. The piece, however, is enlivened by the introduction of other characters, among whom Diogenes and three slaves are the most remarkable. The following dialogue between the hero and the cynical philosopher is very characteristic of the piece: —

" *Alexander.* In the mean time, to recreate my spirits, being so near, we will go see Diogenes. And, see, where his tub is. — Diogenes!

Diogenes. Who calleth?

Alexander. Alexander. How happened it that you would not come out of your tub to my palace?

Diogenes. Because it was as far from my tub to your palace, as from your palace to my tub.

Alexander. Why, then, dost thou owe no reverence to kings?

Diogenes. No.

Alexander. Why so?

Diogenes. Because they be no gods.

Alexander. They be gods of the earth.

Diogenes. Yea, gods of the earth.

Alexander. Plato is not of thy mind.

Diogenes. I am glad of it.

Alexander. Why?

Diogenes. Because I would have none of Diogenes' mind but Diogenes.

Alexander. If Alexander have any thing that may pleasure Diogenes, let me know, and take it

Diogenes. Then take not from me what you cannot give me, the light of the world.

Alexander. What dost thou want?

Diogenes. Nothing that you have.

Alexander. I have the world at command.

Diogenes. And I, in contempt.

Alexander. Thou shalt live no longer than I will.

Diogenes. But I shall die whether thou will or no.

Alexander. How should one learn to be content?

Diogenes. Unlearn to covet.

Alexander. Hephestion, were I not Alexander, I would wish to be Diogenes."

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14. *Thomas Nash* * (died about 1600) was not so much distinguished for his dramatic as for his satirical talents. He must, therefore, be soon dismissed. The place of his birth was Leostoffe, in Suffolk; the time can only be inferred from the fact that in 1585 he took his bachelor's degree at St. John's College, Cambridge. He never proceeded master of arts; and it is generally believed that before the expiration of the period required by the statutes he left, or rather was expelled, college. Many contemporary writers incurred the same penalty; a proof, were others wanting, that, whatever might be the literary taste of the age, it had little reason to boast of its purity. In fact, its prevailing character was dissipation. Nash was as thoughtless as the rest: he was present, as we have already seen, at the last fatal banquet with Robert Greene; and to his libertinism in other respects we have allusions enough in the writings of men who knew him. Like Greene, too, he is charged with want of integrity, but in his case, this may be an unfair charge. His poverty might be the cause of his numerous debts; imprudence is certainly another: but imprudence and want of principle have no necessary connection. He appears to have suffered from misfortune. For one production of his, —*The Isle of Dogs*, — he was imprisoned. Persons in authority were not fond of being satirised, or even of having their faults exposed to the public eye. Whether honest indignation or disappointed hopes gave acerbity to his observations, can never, perhaps, be known. He, himself, in his latter years, was not ashamed of the production. To his defence of Greene against the attacks of Harvey we have before alluded. † Hence the hatred which that stiff, formal, worldly-prudent, selfish, conceited,

* This article is extracted from Baker's Biographia Dramatica; from Dodsley's Old Plays, last edition; from Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry; from D'Israeli's Quarrels of Authors, &c.

† See the Sketch of Greene.

and rancorously-malignant writer continued to bear him. Like Greene, he repented of his follies, and professed his desire to live in peace with all men; and, like Greene, he obtained, from that bitter enemy, insults instead of credit. In one of the most affecting of his compositions, — one in which he is evidently anxious to inculcate repentance and piety, and which he entitles *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem,* — he expresses his sincere contrition for the offence which he may have given to any man.

"Nothing is there now so much in my vows as to be at peace with all men, and make submissive amends where I most displeased; not basely fear-blasted, or constraintively over-ruled, but purely pacificatory: suppliant for reconciliation and pardon, do I sue to the principallest of them 'gainst whom I professed utter enmity; even of Master Doctor Harvey I heartily desire the like, whose fame and reputation (through some precedent injurious provocations and fervent excitements of young heads) I rashly assailed: yet, now better advised, and of his perfections more confirmedly persuaded, unfeignedly I entreat of the whole world, from my pen, his worth may receive no impeachment. All acknowledgments of abundant scholarship, courteous, well-governed behaviour, and ripe experienced judgment, do I attribute unto him."

In what manner was this handsome acknowledgment received? In a way characteristic enough of Harvey.

"Riotous vanity was wont to root so deeply, that it could hardly be unrooted; and, where reckless impudency taketh possession, it useth not very hastily to be dispossessed. What say you to a spring of rankest villany in February, and a harvest of ripest divinity in May? But why should we hereafter talk any more of paradoxes and impossibilities, when he that penned the most desperate and abominable pamphlet of *Strange News,* and disgorged his stomack of as poisonous rancour as ever was vomited in print, within four months is won, or charmed, or enchanted (or what metamorphosis should I term it?) to astonish carnal minds with spiritual meditations!"

So, this is the *respectable* doctor Gabriel Harvey, the friend of Spencer, the well-esteemed by the world, the moral, the sober, the decent! Greene, and Marlowe,

and Peele, and Nash, had doubtless their faults; but the worst of the four was a saint in comparison with this malignant pharisee.

The fame of Nash must rest on his satirical talents, which, judging from his controversy with Harvey, were certainly of a very superior kind. Only one of his entire plays, *Summer's last Will and Testament*, has come down to our days. In *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, he was assisted by Marlowe; and of his *Isle of Dogs* no portion remains. Of *Summer's last Will and Testament* we shall give no analysis, as it has been rendered accessible to every reader by a late editor.* It is chiefly an allegorical performance: *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Christmas, Bankwinter, Sol*, &c. are among the personages. If it has considerable fancy, it has quite as much tediousness; and we do not think any reader's patience would go through it.

15. The other dramatists who began to write for the stage before Shakespear was celebrated, and who were styled his contemporaries, must be dismissed in a few lines. *Henry Chettle* (died 1610) was concerned in no less than thirty-eight plays, within the short space of seven years (1596—1603), but four only have descended to us, and of them not one perhaps is his en-entire composition. His powers were feeble, his education narrow, his manner unattractive. *S. Daniel* (died 1619) was a stickler for the classical in opposition to the romantic school; he considered the unities of more importance than either genius or nature. *Thomas Lodge* (died 1626) was a voluminous writer. As a poet, he is more distinguished for natural thoughts and feelings than many of his contemporaries. But if this praise be applicable to his lyrical, it is not so to his dramatic poetry, which has little grace and no vigour to recommend it. At this day Ledge deserves to be known only from one fact, — that one of his works, *Rosalinde*, is the basis of Shakespear's *As You Like It*. *A. Munday* (died 1633) was probably a fertile

* Dodsley's Old Plays, vol ix. edit. 1825.

writer; at least Henshawe's diary mentions fourteen plays in which he had a share in the short space of seven years. But nearly all have perished, and the world is not likely to suffer by the loss. One of his plays, — *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon*, part i., has been lately reprinted in a supplementary volume to Dodsley's collection. It has certainly merit; it has some force of language; and it describes rustic manners very well. Every thing, in fact, relating to so well known a personage as Robin Hood, the outlawed Earl of Huntingdon, is sure to be read with interest. Part the second of this drama was the joint composition of Munday and Chettle. *R. Wilson*, author of *The Cobbler's Prophecy; T. Brandon*, author of *Virtuous Octavia;* are scarcely deserving of mention. Their merit, as indeed that of the writers in the present paragraph, has been much overrated.

The preceding pages, in connection with the life of Heywood in the former volume, will enable the reader to understand the state of the English stage when Shakespear arose.

3. *Life and Works of Shakespear.*

The indifference of contemporaries, and even of the generations after his death, to the personal history of Shakespear, has often been matter of astonishment. Nobody, indeed, so much as cared* for the knowledge. Sir William Dugdale, a native of Coventry, about twenty miles from Stratford-upon-Avon, who published the Antiquities of Warwickshire, thirty years only after the poet's death, and who might have seen a score of persons once familiar with him, did not trouble himself to make a single inquiry on the subject. Fuller was equally careless. Edward Phillips, author of *Theatrum Poetarum*, just condescends to mention such a man. Langbaine, and Blount, and Gildon copy their predecessors. Anthony à Wood, one of the most industrious

writers England ever produced, who was born only fourteen years after Shakespear's decease; and who lived within thirty-six miles of the place where so much information might have been obtained, has not a syllable about the dramatist, though he has found room for many other writers who never saw Oxford. Walton—old Isaak Walton—who had so much poetry in his nature, and whose pen was occupied with subjects so much inferior in interest, disregarded Shakespear. Dryden professed to admire him; but Dryden did not collect a single particular of his life. Yet even in the time of this poet, abundance of information might have been obtained respecting the bard of Avon. Braithwaite the poet, a personal acquaintance of Shakespear, lived until 1673. Jasper Mayne, who celebrated his death in some verses, was alive in 1671. Lord Stanhope, who died in 1677, must have heard many particulars from his father, who had been at court during the period of Shakespear's glory. The duke of Newcastle, who was twenty-four years old on the poet's death, and who lived until 1676, must have known as many. Sir Richard Bishop of Bridge-town, near to Stratford (1581-1673), must have known the poet many years before 1616, the period of his death. All these Dryden might have consulted, had he cared either for Shakespear's memory, or for the history of the stage. Many others, who were born a few years after his death, might, as they lived in the same county, or in the same neighbourhood, have procured information enough. Such were sir Robert Atkyns, sir Richard Verney, and Frances countess of Dorset. Even Shakespear's family might have been consulted. Dryden was eighteen when the eldest daughter of Shakespear died; he was thirty-one when the younger, Judith Quincy, died; and he was above forty when lady Barnard, the grand-daughter of Shakespear, whom he had personally known, followed them to the tomb. In short, there never was a person of whom more *might have* been, of whom so little *was*, collected, until the attempt was vain.

Whence arose this indifference to the memory of Shakespear? That the public were not indifferent to that of other writers, is abundantly evident from our biographical collections during the seventeenth century. The reason is plain: Shakespear was not so much esteemed, even during his life, as we commonly suppose; and after his retirement from the stage he was all but forgotten. During a whole century, only four editions of his complete works — and these small — were published; and there would only have been three, but for the destructive fire of London in 1666. In fifty years after his death, he was, by Dryden's account, becoming somewhat obsolete, and other dramatists were "generally preferred to him." As late as the commencement of the last century, lord Shaftesbury complains of his unpolished style and antiquated wit; and Gildon informs us that for this very reason he was refused admission into many poetical collections. After the Restoration, two of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas were acted for one of his. In the prologue to one of Shirley's* we read:

"In our old plays, the humour, love, and passion,
Like doublet, hose, and cloak, are out of fashion;
That which the world called wit, in Shakespear's age,
Is laughed at, as improper for *our* stage."

And in a satire published about thirteen years afterwards we are informed † —

"At every shop, while Shakespear's lofty style
Neglected lies, to mice and worms a spoil;
Gilt on the back, just smoking from the press,
The apprentice shews you *D'Urfey's Hudibras*,
Crown's Mask, bound up with Settle's choicest labours,
And promises some new essay of Babor's."

This, it may be said, was satire; the author was condemning the taste of the age. Granted; but still the taste *was* there. Nor would it be difficult to find writers enough who sincerely believed in the inferiority

* Love's Tricks, 1667. † Anon. 1680.

of Shakespear to the dramatists of their own day. Thus Cartwright, in some verses on Fletcher *:

"Shakespear to thee was dull, whose best jest lies
I' the lady's questions and the fool's replies;
Old-fashioned wit, which walk'd from town to town,
In trunk-hose, which our fathers call'd the clown;
Whose wit our nicer times would obsceneness call,
And which made bawdry pass for comical.
Nature was all *his* art; *thy* vein was free
As his, but without his scurrility."

These verses, written about thirty years after Shakespear's death, show the little estimation in which he was held by the next generation. Even Dryden disparages his talents; nor was it before the eighteenth century that he began to be understood. The preface of Pope was the first thing that procured general admiration for his works. And is not the case of Milton himself nearly parallel? Until the number of the *Spectator* in which Addison attracted public attention to his works appeared, he might, indeed, be mentioned, but he was little read, and little prized. The causes of this neglect are obvious. The great body of readers are incapable of comprehending a master: they form no opinion of their own, but implicitly follow that of certain arbiters; and until the few have inclination to fix the law, — until rival passions and prejudice are laid in the tomb, and a new generation, unbiassed by the characters or events of the old one, arises,— the popular mind is left in uncertainty as to the light in which an author should be viewed, and, if not ignorant that he ever existed, certainly indifferent to the fact. In literature, as in religion and politics, few indeed are the men who think, or who are qualified to think, for themselves. These instances, and this deduction from them, are instructive; they should teach us charity towards other nations who have neglected *their* men of genius. We may censure the Spaniards for their treatment of Cervantes, the Portuguese for that of Camoens; but have not *we*, the

* 1647.

English people, greater guilt to acknowledge? Let us cease to reproach others until we can destroy all records of the past, — until the wan and melancholy countenances of a Milton, a Butler, a Savage, can no longer scowl upon us.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, April 23, 1564, which day was the festival of St. George the Martyr. By some modern writers attempts have been made to show that he was of a genteel family, — as if genius could derive dignity from the paltry distinctions of an artificial society! His father was a glover, very honest, perhaps, but very poor. Of his poverty we have evidence enough. In 1555, he was sued for eight pounds, which he could not pay. In 1578, when his eldest son William was fourteen, he was exempted, through inability, from paying his share of the poor-rate (three shillings and four-pence) for the borough of Stratford. The following year, he was a defaulter to the same amount in another contribution levied for local purposes. And in the clause of a will made the very same year, we learn that he was indebted to the testator, Roger Sadler, a baker, five pounds, for the payment of which he had procured two sureties, whose names are specified. No doubt the debt was incurred for bread. Nor were his circumstances much improved in 1586; for early in that year, a distringas levied on his goods and chattels was returned by the bailiff on the ground that there were no effects whatever on which the instrument could be executed. In short, he was of very obscure family: we know nothing of his father, whose name is not even mentioned in any document of these times.

Yet, in spite of these facts, it has been contended that the family "were of good figure and fortune" in Stratford, and "are mentioned as gentlemen." To support this absurd plea, two circumstances have been adduced. In the first place, John Shakespear, our poet's father, married an heiress. He certainly had to wife, Mary,

the youngest daughter of Robert Arden of Wilmecote in the county of Warwick, who was of an ancient family, and who is styled an esquire. With her, too, he received some property; but it was a small portion. In money it was six pounds, thirteen shillings, and four-pence; in land its value is not so easily ascertained; but as it was mortgaged, in 1578, for forty pounds; and as the necessities of his family were so great that he could pay neither his taxes nor his baker, we may assume that it was encumbered to nearly the full value. What strengthens this inference is the allegation of the lender in a court of law, that the farm was forfeited to him; that the money was lent for two years only; and that if it were not repaid by the feast of St. Michael, 1580, the land became of right the property of Lambert and his heirs for ever. It may, indeed, be replied, that this loan was probably raised to purchase two small houses, which, in the sequel, our poet inhabited; yet this fact, if true, does not invalidate the other, viz., that of his poverty. If we take the comparative value of money in that age and the present as four to one — and assuredly it is not more — the heiress in question was not one of those with whom a modern fortune-hunter would be eager to meet. So much for the first of John Shakespear's claims to gentility and wealth. The second is, that he was one of the dignitaries of the corporation at Stratford, — that he passed successively through the offices of constable, chamberlain, alderman, and high-bailiff. It is indeed true that in 1558 he served the office of constable; in 1561 he was chamberlain; in 1565 he was elected alderman; and in 1568 he was chief-magistrate. But we must not compare these offices with such as we have seen in our own days; and we must not confound ancient Stratford with modern London or Liverpool. All these dignities, we have already seen, were perfectly consistent with the most deplorable poverty; they were, in fact, gratuitously filled; nor were the duties in so small a community very frequent or very large. They were

filled by humble shopkeepers and merchants — by woollen-drapers, mercers, butchers, grocers, &c. — men who, had the duties been burdensome, could not, without compensation, have afforded time for their discharge. But let us inquire into the state of a borough which gave to our author's father his distinction of "*Master* John Shakespear," and "justice of peace."

Stratford or Stretford, however insignificant, is a place of considerable antiquity. It is mentioned long before the Conquest, in a charter of Egwin, bishop of Worcester, of which see it was a manor. The bishops had once a palace there; and to this circumstance we must attribute the origin of its municipal government. They held a court-leet there twice a year, and were no doubt its benefactors as well as its feudal superiors.* Subject to that see it remained until the infancy of Edward VI. encouraged the audacious nobility of England to plunder the feeble. In the third year of that royal child's pretended reign, the all-powerful and most unprincipled John Dudley, earl of Warwick (afterwards duke of Northumberland), compelled the then bishop, John Heath, to surrender it to him. On his attainder, it was for a while granted to his duchess; but in 1556 we find it appropriated to the Hospital of the Savoy, — the best use that could be made of land which had so long been the property of the church. But the times were unsettled. It reverted for a few years to the crown: by Elizabeth it was granted to Ambrose Dudley, earl of Warwick (son of the worthless peer already mentioned), and in the failure of heirs male, to his brother Robert Dudley, afterwards earl of Leicester, a man more infamous than even his father. Both dying without issue, it reverted to the crown; and after two or three changes it came into the hands of Lionel, earl of Middlesex, who has transmitted it to his descendant the present duke of Dorset.

Stratford had a college, or rather a chantry, founded in the fifth year of Edward III., by John de Stratford, bishop of Winchester. It was served by four priests

and a warden, and was endowed with lands and tenements amounting, at the dissolution, to 127*l.* 18*s.* 9*d.* per annum. This endowment eventually followed the fate of the manor. And the place had also its burgesses as early as the reign of Richard I. It was not, however, incorporated until the seventh year of Edward VI. In the charter granted by his successor, the principal inhabitants were formed into a body corporate under the name of the bailiff and burgesses of Stratford-upon-Avon. The number of aldermen was to be fourteen, from whom was to be annually elected the bailiff. As this body was required to keep the bridge and roads in repair; to maintain twenty-four decayed inhabitants in almshouses which had been hitherto maintained by a charitable fraternity, the Guild of the Holy Cross; to pay the master of the grammar-school twenty pounds a year, and the vicar of the parish the same sum; they were entrusted with the revenues of the dissolved guild, which were about forty-six pounds per annum, and the tithes of all the lands which had belonged to the dissolved college, amounting to about thirty-four pounds annually. The whole income of the corporation, therefore, was the magnificent sum of eighty pounds, — from which, when twenty pounds were deducted for the vicar, and twenty for the schoolmaster, only forty would remain for the support of the twenty-four paupers, for the institution of the almshouses, and the repairs of the bridge. So much for the wealth of a place of which John Shakespear the glover was the bailiff for one year, and of which the entire population was not fifteen hundred. "Oh, but he was a justice of peace!" This is just as foolish as the other allegation. His powers, *as bailiff*, — consequently they endured for one year only, — were those of escheator, coroner, almoner, and clerk of the market; with that of holding a court of record every fortnight for the adjudication of pecuniary suits within the jurisdiction of the borough. But even here he had no authority; he could do nothing without the aldermen and a few

associate burgesses, whose sanction was necessary in every instance, and whose spokesman merely he was.

But, exclaim half a dozen writers, how could the father of our poet be so poor and so low, when, in 1596, he obtained from the Herald's College a grant of arms, — a grant then awarded to men of family only? In the first place, it will not, we presume, be denied that the very fact of the application proves that arms had not been hitherto used by John Shakespear or his immediate ancestors. In the second place, the grant was obtained by false representations, or, at least, conceded on false grounds. What made a poor, obscure glover like him apply for the distinction, seems to have puzzled more than one writer: but if we recollect that, in 1596, his eldest son, William, was approaching the zenith of popularity; was in possession of considerable property, the reward of his histrionic and dramatic labours; and, from his intimacy with the fashionable men of the court, was ambitious; we shall have no difficulty in surmising at whose instance the application was made.* The man who could neither pay his taxes nor his baker, who toiled at the most humble of occupations, who was little better than a pauper, could, if left to himself, have no such foolish ambition; but seeing that his son was rising to eminence, was furnished with no inconsiderable portion of wealth, and able to pay off the mortgage of forty pounds with which he had burthened the small farm received with his wife, he would require no great persuasion to make the attempt. He succeeded, but the concession itself will show by what allegations. In that instrument it is said that one of his ancestors had been rewarded by Henry VII. with several lands and tenements in the county of Warwick, which tenements and lands, it was

* There is, indeed, *mention* of a grant of arms to a John Shakespear, as early as 1570 But neither the instrument, nor any copy of it, is extant either in the Herald's Office, or any where else. *If* it ever existed, the John Shakespear in question was some other than the father of our dramatist

further insinuated, were still in the possession of the family. Now this could not be true. Of these ancestors nothing whatever is known: even the father of John Shakespear has escaped the investigations of antiquaries. Had any ancestor of the family been a tenant in capite, as is here alleged, the instrument would be in existence, whatever the fate of the lands which it accompanied. But no such instrument can be found, and for this reason,—that none was ever in being. Had the Shakespears been held in such consideration — had they been held in any consideration whatever—their location must have been known in some district of the county. There were several, indeed, of the name; but all were in the humblest walks of life: so far was any one of them from claiming a knightly or a gentle descent, that not one of them even held the rank of yeoman. Yet the grant of the Garter king at arms had some foundation; for true is the maxim, *Omnis fabula ex veritate oritur.* This ancestor, thus honoured by the seventh Henry, was not of John Shakespear's family, but of his wife's. By representing the ancestor as *his own,* the property he had received with her as his own, and greatly exaggerating its value, he appears to have obtained the grant. Such is the only inference we can draw from the instrument, from the confirmation of that instrument, and the other documents which the industrious Malone has collected in his "Appendix to the Life of Shakespear." What in no slight degree strengthens this deduction, is the fact, that censure was cast upon the Garter king for granting the privilege of arms to persons of no fortune or note; and that the confirmation in question (expedited three years afterwards) more fully and more distinctly detailed the grounds on which the privilege was granted to John Shakespear. This time the Clarencieux, the celebrated Camden, no less than the Garter, sir William Dethick, was concerned in the concession, — a presumption that William Shakespear had bestirred himself to justify the preceding grant to his father. But those officers

were not over nice in the matter: they went by hearsay only; they received the statements in the memorial as incontrovertible; nor is it unlikely that some personage, whom they would have been sorry to disoblige, requested, or perhaps enjoined, the expediting of the instrument. Yet they did not escape censure. By some officers of the same college, they were charged with "granting arms wrongfully, either in respect of the arms themselves, which, in some cases, were said to be similar to other arms already possessed by several ancient families; or in respect of the persons to whom they were granted, who, it was alleged, were either tradesmen, or persons of so low a condition as not to be entitled to such an honourable distinction." One of the persons thus excepted to was John Shakespear; and the two kings at arms were required to defend themselves, in 1602, before Henry lord Howard, sir Robert Sidney, and sir Edward Dier, chancellor of the Order of the Garter. In their answer, though they omitted one falsehood contained in the grant, viz. that John Shakespear inherited property to the value of five hundred pounds, — a falsehood too glaring to be supported, as the only property he had was through his wife, and was not worth one seventh of the sum, — they stated others of even greater magnitude.* Altogether the affair is discreditable to the father, to our poet himself, and to the two kings at arms.

To some readers it may seem that we have dwelt on this subject more than it deserves. We have, however, been anxious to contribute *our* share to the dissipation of ancient error. Let our dramatist stand on his own merits, not on the adventitious, and, in the eye of philosophy, childish distinctions of the world. Would his

* "*Shakspeare.*—It may as well be said, that Hareley, who beareth gould a bend between two cotizes sables, and all other that bear or and argent a bend sables, vsurpe the coat of the lorde Manley. As for the speare in bend, is a patible difference; and the person to whom it was granted hath borne magestracy, and was justice of the peace at Stratford upon Avon. He married the daughter and heire of Arderne, and was able to maintain that estate."

genius have been one jot the more refulgent, had he been the son of a booby squire? or the grandson of a knight? nay, had he been the heir of the proudest house in Europe? If there is an aristocracy of wealth and title, there is also one infinitely nobler, — that to which Shakespear belonged; and his name will be remembered when those of our Russells, our Cavendishes, and our Pelhams have for ever disappeared.

From the preceding circumstances it may be inferred that William Shakespear had little chance of obtaining a liberal education. His father had several children,— three brothers certainly, and two sisters, besides others who died in infancy. John Shakespear too, we may add, was illiterate: he could not so much as write his name; and his mark is at this day to be found at the foot of several written instruments. William, therefore, could derive no great admiration of learning from that quarter. He had, however, one advantage; the school of Stratford was a grammar school, and, like all our ancient foundations, open to the most indigent boys. That he was educated, or rather that he received the rudiments of education, there, cannot reasonably be doubted. He had certainly some little knowledge of Latin; and we know not where else he could obtain it. The time which he passed at school, the light in which he was regarded there, might be interesting to know; but must for ever baffle curiosity. If three different circumstances be admitted to have any weight in the consideration, — the poverty of his father, his limited acquirements, and the fact that he was married at the early age of eighteen, — that time could scarcely have been long. His surely was not a mind that could have wasted the best season of life: we may add, that had he acquired much knowledge, he would have yearned for more; and he would not, at so early an age, have renounced that delightful, that ennobling path, even for the happiness of matrimony. Of his wife, we only know that her name was Anne Hathaway, and that she

was nearly eight years older than himself. In 1583 she brought him a daughter; early in 1585 she brought him twins, a son and daughter; and the baptismal registers of all are to be found at Stratford, though there is no entry of his marriage. This is a presumption that Anne Hathaway was not a resident of the borough, or the ceremony would have been performed there.

For the first twenty-five years of Shakespear's life, viz. from his birth in 1564 to 1589, when we find him an actor and shareholder in the Blackfriar's Theatre, London, we have nothing but conjecture to guide us. What was the conduct of his youth? What were the circumstances which induced him to leave Stratford with his wife and children—if, indeed, they were not left behind him? These are questions which can never, perhaps, be *satisfactorily* answered. In the absence of authentic biography, however, we have tradition enough; and this in its turn has given rise to sufficient speculation. The speculation we shall reject: one, at least, of the traditions we cannot pass over in silence. It is thus related by Mr. Rowe:—

"He (Shakespear) had, by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company; and amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing engaged him, more than once, in robbing a park that belonged to sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentlemen, as he thought somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge the ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him. And though this—probably the first—essay of his poetry be lost, it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London."

To this story some objections may be urged.—1. If for this misdemeanor Shakespear were compelled to leave Stratford, it must have been some time after his marriage; but an age so mature is not very consistent with the deed.—2. There was, undoubtedly, a sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, who rebuilt the family mansion

there, who was a justice of peace, a member of parliament, a frequent visiter at Stratford, and a rigid preserver of game. But, as the industrious Malone has well shown, if Shakespear really committed the offence, he had no reason to forsake his native place through fear of the consequences. By a statute of Elizabeth, all the punishment that could be inflicted was a fine treble the value of the venison, three months' imprisonment, and security for his good behaviour during seven years. Poor as he might be, we cannot reasonably suppose that he would be unable to pay the fine; and few as his respectable connections might be, we have still more difficulty in believing that he could not have found the necessary sureties.—3. But there was no park, and we may therefore conclude that there were no deer, at Charlecote. There was, indeed, a manor of Fulbroke, mentioned in tradition as the property of a sir Thomas Lucy: but this was "disparked;" in other words, though it had been, prior to 1554, a park, it was one no longer, and was therefore no resort for deer. This manor, we may add, was not the property of the sir Thomas in question, nor was it that of his son; it was purchased by his grandson in the reign of James I.; and as *he* was also Thomas, we may explain the confusion of the dates. It may, indeed, be replied, that though there was no park, there *might* be deer. If this should be granted, still where there were no trees, no enclosure, there could be no penalty for destroying the animals. But we need not make the concession; for we believe there is no instance on record of deer being kept any where else than in "a legal park." When we consider that Charlecote never had such a park, and that Fulbroke had none from the middle of the sixteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century, we may safely conclude that Shakespear never stole the deer of sir Thomas Lucy.

But, though we are thus compelled to discredit this popular story, we do so only so far as the park of sir

Thomas Lucy is concerned. The maxim we have before cited — *Omnis fabula, &c.* — is, we think, in opposition to Malone, as applicable here as in any other case. There are many allusions to the charge of deer-stealing long before the time of Rowe. A resident of Turbich, in Worcestershire, — no great distance from Stratford, — who died in 1703, upwards of ninety years of age, remembered the story as a common one in his youth. It must, therefore, have been current in 1630, or fourteen years after Shakespear's death. Fulman, the antiquarian collector (1632—1688), who resided for some time at Chesterton, in Warwickshire, has left a brief notice of it in his papers. It is also mentioned in the MS. collections of Oldys, and by the famous Joshua Barnes. In confirmation of the tradition, we might adduce the allusions to sir Thomas Lucy's coat of arms in the *Merry Wives of Windsor.* The *dozen white luces* are there said to form a good coat. Now sir Thomas had *three* only; but this deviation, as even Malone admits, was intentionally made lest the application should be too direct, and be resented by that gentleman's son, residing, when the play was written, at Charlecote, and much respected by the burgesses of Stratford. To understand this allusion rightly, it is necessary to observe, that, according to the local pronunciation, *Lucy* was pronounced *loosy;* and as another word, not very frequent in polite ears, yet not to be omitted here, *lousy* had a similar pronunciation, we may at once see the purport of the allusion. We may add, that the song alleged to have been made on the knight is still extant; and though its authenticity may be questionable, we do not think it so unworthy of Shakespear's early genius, as some modern critics: certainly he has left many worse things.*—For all these reasons, though we do not credit one half of the story, we think it had some kind of foundation in fact. If sir Thomas had no park of his own, still he might be the magistrate before whom young Shakespear was

* See Appendix A.

brought for deer-stealing in some other park. By no other supposition can we account for the prevalence of the tradition at a period immediately following his death. Let the reader adopt or reject it at his pleasure. In the more unfavourable case, the memory of the poet will suffer little from a youthful frolic. That the misdemeanor was common enough in those days, and scarcely visited by reprobation, is undoubted. In the estimation of the sagest, law, and not morality, was outraged by the act.*

Whether the alleged misdemeanor had any influence over the departure of Shakespear or not, we have reason to believe that he had an early predilection for the stage. Companies of actors frequently visited Stratford. In 1569, the queen's and the earl of Worcester's were there: in 1573, the earl of Leicester's were there: the following year, two other companies were in the town; and two years afterwards (1576), lord Leicester's were again there: add that, from 1579 to 1587, one or even two companies of players visited that borough at intervals of little more than twelve months; and we may easily account for the partiality of Shakespear for the histrionic profession. It was, doubtless, with one of these companies that he left Stratford, and made his appearance in the metropolis.—The date of his arrival has been much disputed. In 1584 he must have been

* Thus, according to Antony Wood, Dr. John Thornborough (afterwards bishop of Worcester) and his kinsmen "seldom studied or gave themselves to their books, but spent their lives in the fencing schools and dancing schools, *in stealing deer and conies, in hunting the hare* and wooing girls." And bishop Corbet, in his Iter Boreale:—

"Now whether it were providence or luck,
Whether the keeper's or *the stealer's* buck,
There we had venison."

Also Fuller:—"I will insert a letter of lady Elizabeth, written to him (Peregrine Bertie) with her own hand; and, reader, deal in matters of this nature as *when venison is set before thee*,—eat the one and read the other, *never asking whence either came*."

This reminds us of the usual observation of country innkeepers when they had provided this forbidden dainty for some bereaved guest: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what luck will send you!" The saying was as well known in Germany as in England. Joseph II., according to tradition, was once greeted in this manner by his rustic host, who was ignorant of his quality, and who had robbed his own park for the occasion.

at Stratford, as, early in 1585, his wife was delivered of twins, and both were baptized in the church of that borough: in 1589, he had been some time in London. In the latter year he was one of the sixteen shareholders in the Blackfriar's Theatre, his name being the twelfth on the list. This fact, which the indefatigable Mr. Collier has recently brought to light *, may safely lead to the presumption that he had repaired to the Blackfriars immediately after his departure from Stratford. Supposing that he left in 1585, surely four years would not be more than sufficient for him not only to acquire some reputation as an actor, but a share as proprietor. The date, therefore, usually assigned for the commencement of his professional labours in London — 1586 or 1587 — is not supported by probability.

The important fact just mentioned is contained in a petition to the privy council. Much dissatisfaction had been felt by the church and the government, that subjects of a political and religious nature had been introduced on the stage. This was an abuse which the ministers of Elizabeth were resolved to extirpate by the suppression of the houses in which it had been manifested. Early in November, lord Burghley wrote to the lord mayor, whom he directed [illegible] to ascertain the names of the guilty parties, and a few days subsequently the privy council nominated the lord mayor, the master of the revels, and the archbishop of Canterbury, into a commission to remedy the grievance. It was on this occasion that Shakespear and [illegible] copartners addressed the privy council, protesting that they had never offended in that manner, that no complaint had ever been made of them, and that they were ready to yield obedience to any ordinance of that august body. The petition must certainly have been effectual, for they were not molested: it is not, however, improbable that some regulations were made to prevent the repetition of the abuse which had excited the anger of the state.†

* New Facts regarding the Life of Shakespear, p. 10.

† "These are to certifie your right honourable lordships that her ma-

To proceed with the theatrical experience of Shakespear.—In 1596, another attempt was made to dislodge him and his associates from the Blackfriars. From two circumstances, viz. the necessity of repairs, and the death of the original proprietor, James Burbage, the opportunity was thought a favourable one for the purpose. A petition, signed by "some of honour," was accordingly presented to the privy council, praying that the theatre might not be repaired, and that performances might no longer take place in it. As before, a counter-petition was presented by the players themselves. * In this instrument, which seems to have

jestie's poore playeres, James Burbadge, Richard Burbadge, John Laneham, Thomas Greene, Robert Wilson, John Taylor, Anth Wadeson, Thomas Pope, George Peele, Augustine Phillipps, Nicholas Towley, William Shakespeare, William Kempe, William Johnson, Baptiste Goodale, and Robert Armyn, being all of them sharers in the Blacke Fryers playhouse, have never given cause of displeasure, in that they have brought in their playes maters of state and religion, unfitt to bee handled by them or to bee presented before lewde spectators; neither hath anie complaynte in that kind ever bene preferrde against them or anie of them Wherefore they trust moste humblie in your lordships' consideration of their former good behaviour, being at all tymes readie and willing to yeelde obedience to any command whatsoever your lordships in your wisdome may thinke in such case meete," &c

"Nov. 1589"

* "To the right honourable the lords of her majestie's most honourable privie councell — The humble petition of Thomas Pope, Richard Burbadge, John Hemings, Augustine Phillips, William Shakespeare, William Kempe, William Slye, Nicholas Tooley, and others, servants to the right honourable the lord chamberlaine to her majestie,

"Sheweth most humbly, that your petitioners are owners and players of the private house, or theatre, in the precinct or libertie of the Blackfriers, which hath beene for many years used and occupied for the playing of tragedies, commedies, histories, enterludes, and playes That the same, by reason of its having beene so long built, hath fallen into great decay, and that besides the reparation thereof, it has beene found necessarie to make the same more convenient for the entertainment of auditories coming thereto. That to this end your petitioners have all and eche of them put down sommes of money, according to their shares in the said theatre, and which they have justly and honestly gained by the exercise of their qualitie of stage-players; but that certaine persons, (some of them of honour) inhabitants of the said precinct and libertie of the Blackfriers, have, as your petitioners are infourmed, besought your honourable lordships not to permit the said private house any longer to remaine open, but hereafter to be shut up and closed, to the manifest and great injurie of your petitioners, who have no other meanes whereby to maintain their wives and families, but by the exercise of their qualitie as they have heretofore done. Furthermore, that in the summer season your petitioners are able to playe at their new built house on the Bankside, calde the Globe, but that in the winter they are compelled to come to the Blackfriers; and if your honorable lordshipps give consent unto that which is prayde against your petitioners, they will not only, while the winter endures, loose the means whereby they now support them selves and their families, but be

been as successful as the former, the name of Shakespear again occurs; and his name is not the twelfth, but the fifth, on the list. This is a proof that, in seven years, he had made greater progress towards respectability and wealth. In seven years more, his name appears the *second* in a patent granted by James I. By a licence of that sovereign, dated the 19th of May, 1603, "Laurence Fletcher, William Shakespear, and others, were constituted the king's players, and were authorised to perform "comedies, tragedies, histories, interludes, morals, pastorals, and stage plays," not merely in London, but in any part of the kingdom. So that, in fourteen years, Shakespear had fought his way from the twelfth to the second place in the list of proprietors. This licence was a most important act: it gave a legal existence to what had formerly depended on the mere will of the privy council. Yet it must not be supposed that the performers continued unmolested. They had, in the first place, to contend with the puritanical spirit which, from the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, became so prevalent in this kingdom. Old plays, and, indeed, all literature other than canting spiritual songs, were held in bad repute by the saints. But, in the second place, these actors rendered themselves justly obnoxious to the citizens of London by their satirical, we might truly say their licentious, representations. The wisdom of the men, the fidelity of the women, are ironically allowed to be unparalleled. In 1605, a complaint was formally made to the royal council of the frequency with which even grave aldermen were brought on the stage, "to their great scandal, and the lessening of their authority;" and apparently steps were taken to limit the abuse. It

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unable to practise them selves in anie playes or enterludes, when calde upon to perform for the recreation and solace of her matie and her honorable court, as they have beene heretofore accustomed. The humble prayer of your petitioners therefore is, that your honorable lordshipps will grant permission to finish the reparations and alterations they have begun; and as your petitioners have hitherto been well ordered in their behaviour, and just in their dealings, that your honorable lordshipps will not inhibit them from acting at their above namde private house in the precinct and libertie of the Blackfriers; and your petitioners, as in dutie most bounden, will ever pray for the encreasing honor and happinesse of your lordshipps."

was, indeed, high time. Such verses as the following, which were spoken on the stage against the London corporation, ought not to have been tolerated: —

> "This fool comes from the citizens —
> Nay, prithee, do not frown!
> I know him as well as you
> By his livery gown —
> Of a rare horn-mad family.
>
> "He is a fool by prenticeship
> And servitude, he says,
> And hates all kinds of wisdom
> But most of all in plays —
> Of a very obstinate family.
>
> "You have him in his livery gown,
> But presently he can
> Qualify for a mule or mare,
> Or for an alderman,
> With a gold chain in his family.
>
> "Being born and bred for a fool,
> Why should he be wise?
> It would make him not so fit to sit
> With his brethren of Ass—size,—
> Of a very long-eared family."

Exasperated by these attacks, in 1608, the city authorities again interfered, on the ground that the Black-friars was within their jurisdiction. The case was argued before the privy council; but from the fact that the players still remained undisturbed, we should infer that the jurisdiction in question was not established.

As this application had been so unavailing, the corporation now changed its mode of proceeding, and proposed to effect by compromise what could not be obtained by law. What compensation would the players be content to receive as the condition of their forsaking the theatre? The subject was discussed; and they sent in an estimate of what they should expect in such a contingency. This document is of value, since it determines the number of shares which Shakespear held in the theatre, and the compensation which he ex-

pected for them, no less than for his theatrical property in general. It proves that the shares of the whole theatre were twenty. Of these, four each fell to three actors; three each to two other actors; while the remaining actors had two, one and a half, and half a share each. Shakespear had *four* shares, each of which he estimated at the annual value of *33l. 6s. 8d.*, and the full value of each, at seven years' purchase, *233l. 6s. 8d.* The value, therefore, of the four shares he estimated at nearly 1000*l.* In addition to this, he demanded "for his wardrobe and other properties of the same playhouse," *500l.*, making an aggregate of *1433l. 6s. 8d.* This would be equal to *7000l.* of our present money.*

It may, indeed, be objected that the players demanded more for the property than it was worth. No doubt they did; yet, making all reasonable deduction for this fact, we are gratified in perceiving that the circumstances of Shakespear were very easy; that he was by no means a poor man. This is confirmed by other circumstances. In the first place, he had paid off the mortgage of forty pounds with which his father had

* "For avoiding of the playhouse in the precinct of the Blackfriers.

	£	s.	d.
Imp			
Richard Burbidge owneth the fee, and is alsoe a sharer therein His intere[illegible]e rateth at the grosse summe of 1000*l.* for the fee, and for his foure shares the summe of 933*l.* 6s. 8*d.* - - - - - - -	1933	6	8
Item			
Laz. Fletcher owith three shares, which he rateth at 700*l.*, that is at 7 yeares purchase for eche share, or 33*l* 6*s* 8*d.* one with another - - - - - -	700	0	0
Item.			
W Shakespeare asketh for the wardrobe and properties of the some play-house 500*l*, and for his 4 shares, the same as his fellowes, Burbidge and Fletcher, viz. 933*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* -	1433	6	8
Item.			
Heminges and Condell, eche 2 shares - - -	933	6	8
Item.			
Joseph Taylor 1 share and an half - - -	350	0	0
Item.			
Lowing also 1 share and halfe - - - -	350	0	0
Item			
Foure more players with one halfe share to eche of them -	466	13	4
Sum totales £	6166	13	4

"Moreover the hired men of the companie demaund some recompense for their great losse, and the widows and orphanes of playeres, who are paide by the sharers, at diveres rates and proportions, so as in the whole it will coste the lo. Mayor and the citizens at the least 7000*l.*

encumbered his mother's property. In the second, five years before this date, he had purchased, at Stratford on Avon, a small messuage, with barn, garden, and orchard, for sixty pounds. In the third place, the year before this latter purchase, (in May, 1602,) he had bought one hundred and seven acres of land within the borough of Stratford. Again, in 1605, he gave 440*l.* for the lease of a moiety of the tithes at Stratford; and from other circumstances we may infer that, if he did not make other purchases in lands, he lent money on mortgage. From all this we may safely conclude that he was a fortunate man; and we may see the propriety of the allusion to him and his fortunes in a contemporary tract. In that tract a certain player is advised not to darken his merit in the country where nobody can estimate him, but hasten to London, to live on all men, but allow no man to live on him; and when his purse was well lined, to purchase a snug lordship in the country.*

As the performances at the Blackfriars still continued, it is evident that no arrangement could be effected between the proprietors and the corporation. Shakespear, however, does not seem to have been a *performer* at this period: we no not meet with his name in any character after 1603; and though he might frequently appear in the scene without any intimation of the fact being left us, the probability is, that he found the com-

* *Ratsey's Ghost.* This Ratsey was a noted highwayman, who was once very liberal to a company of strolling players; he gave them forty shillings for performing before him; but then he overtook them and robbed them of it. However, he gave the leading actor very good advice:—

"And for you, sirrah, (says he to the chiefest of them,) thou hast a good presence upon a stage, methinks thou darkenest thy merit by playing in the country: get thee to London, for if one man were dead, they will have much need for such as thou art There would be none, in my opinion, fitter than thyself to play his parts: my conceit is such of thee, that I durst all the money in my purse on thy head to play Hamlet with him for a wager. There thou shalt learne to be frugal, (for players were never so thrifty as they are now about London), and to feed upon all men, to let none feed upon thee; to make thy [illegible] stranger to thy pocket, thy heart slow to perform thy tongue's promise; and when thou feelest thy purse well lined, buy thee some place of lordship in the country, that, growing weary of playing, thy money may there bring thee to dignity and reputation: then thou needest care for no man; no, not for them that before made thee proud with speaking their words on the stage."—'Sir, I thank you (quoth the player) for this good council: I promise you I will make use of it; for I have heard, indeed, of some that have gone to London very meanly, and have come in time to be exceeding wealthy."

position of plays more easy, as it was certainly more agreeable to his genius. He wrote for the *Globe* as well as the *Blackfriars*, — the one being a summer, the other a winter, theatre; and he was, no doubt, a shareholder in both. His income, therefore, from both houses, as a shareholder merely, to say nothing of his wardrobes, which he appears to have lent on hire, or of the profits made by his writings, must have been considerable. This will account for his rapid accumulation of property during the latter part of his residence in London. It *may*, indeed, be true that lord Southampton presented him with 1000*l.*; but until we have better evidence for the statement, we shall continue incredulous.

The period of Shakespear's retirement from London to his native town is not more certain than that of his leaving Stratford in his youth. It is generally supposed to have been in the year 1613; but it was probably earlier. For the date in question it is contended that he was certainly in London in 1613, since in that year he was a party to a mortgage, a copy of which has descended to us. But surely he might be there in that year, without having a permanent residence in the metropolis. As reasonably might it be said that he resided at Stratford many years before this period, because he was sometimes to be found there. The truth is, that, long before his retirement from the stage, he was accustomed to visit his native place once a year; nor is there any thing improbable, that after his removal to Stratford, he paid annual visits to the metropolis. Of his frequent journeys between the two, tradition has preserved many vestiges. In fact, they *must* have been frequent, if, as we have reason to infer, his family resided in Stratford during the latter period of his connection with the stage — perhaps even during the whole of it: he would necessarily visit them as frequently as his avocations would admit. Again, as, after his retreat to Warwickshire, he still held an interest in the Blackfriars, if not in the Globe, he would naturally visit

London whenever that interest required his presence. To attempt, therefore, the definition of the period of his retiring from the active duties of his profession, is vain. It is reasonable to infer that he retired to Stratford long before the period usually assigned, because in Stratford he might naturally hope for more quietude, as well as more health, than could be expected amidst the dissipations of a numerous London acquaintance, and the closeness of a London atmosphere.

Of Shakespear's last years we know absolutely nothing. Whether they were wholly passed in Stratford, or alternately between that place and London; what the nature of his avocations while in the country, if, indeed, he had any avocation at all; must for ever elude research. It is generally asserted that he wrote nothing for some years before he died; yet of such an assertion there is not the slightest proof. On the contrary, as many of his dramas were not published until seven years after that event, we may reasonably conclude that some of them were written during that period. The probability, indeed, is, that though he might have no active connection with the stage, he continued to write for the theatre — the Blackfriars — in which he remained a shareholder. Probably, too, he became an excellent boon companion to the gentry of his neighbourhood. Tradition acquaints us with the readiness of his wit and the brilliancy of his conversation. His good nature is equally celebrated; and, altogether, he is represented as "a delightful companion." None of the jests, however, which set the table in a roar, have descended to us. There is, indeed, an epitaph said to have been composed by him for his neighbour John Combe, at the express entreaty of the latter. This John Combe was a rich man, who had acquired much of his gains by usury; and, if tradition be right, he was anxious to see what character his friend the poet would give him in the event of his decease. He made the request at the festive board, and was immediately indulged with the following verses: —

"Ten in the hundred lies here engraved,*
'T is a hundred to ten his soul is not saved.
If any one ask, 'Who lies in this tomb?'
'Oh! oh!' quoth the devil, ''t is my John a Combe.'"

The truth of this anecdote has been called in question: we do not see for what reason. There certainly was a John Combe at or near Stratford; as certainly he was a usurer; and he died about a year before Shakespear. The tradition is as well supported as most others concerning this extraordinary man.†

Shakespear died on the anniversary of his birth, the 23d of April, 1616, at the early age of fifty-two. The nature of his illness is unknown. In two days afterwards, he was buried in the church of Stratford, at the north end of the chancel. A plain grave-stone covers his remains, with the following strange inscription: —

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here!
Bless'd be the man that spares these stones!
And curst be he that moves these bones!"

A monument was subsequently raised to him in the same church, — in what year is unknown, but certainly prior to 1623, with the following distich: —

"Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, populus mœret, Olympus habet."

By his wife, Shakespear had three children. His son, Hamnet, preceded him to the tomb; so that his issue were two daughters; — Susanna, born 1583; and Judith, born 1584. The former, in 1607, was married to a respectable physician, Dr. John Hall; and she died in

* The usual rate of interest in Shakespear's time was ten per cent.

† There are two other epitaphs of the period very similar to the one in the text. Whether Shakespear was indebted to either, or *vice versâ*, we shall not inquire. The first is in a Collection of Epigrams, by H. P. gent. 1608: —

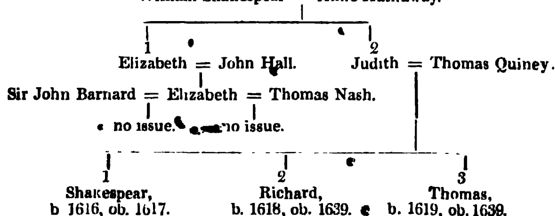
"Ten in a hundred lies under this stone,
And a hundred to ten to the devil he 's gone."

The second is in Camden's Remains: —

"Here lies ten in the hundred,
To the ground fast ramm'd,
'T is an hundred to ten
But his soul is damn'd."

1649. She had issue one daughter only, — Elizabeth, born 1608; married, in 1626, to Thomas Nash. This Elizabeth had no issue, either by Nash, her first husband, or by her second husband, sir John Barnard, knight, whom she married in 1649. On her death, therefore, in 1670, the line of Shakespear, so far as she was concerned, became extinct. In the younger daughter it was sooner extinct. In 1615 she became the wife of Thomas Quiney, and she had issue, but they preceded her to the tomb. She died in 1662. Hence no lineal descendant of Shakespear was in existence after the year 1670.* The posterity of his sister, however, Joan (born in 1569, and married, about 1599, to William Hart, hatter), may still be found in Stratford or its immediate neighbourhood.

That Shakespear died in easy circumstances, is apparent from his will, which will be found in the Appendix.† One thing, however, will surprise the reader,— that he left only his "second best bed" to his wife. How is this? Had he already provided for her? If so, he would surely have alluded to the fact; and if he had left her the interest of a specific sum, or the rent of some messuage, there would, we think, have been a stipulation for the reversion of the property to his children after her decease. The probability is, that he left her nothing. Whether she had given him reason for dissatisfaction, or whether his affections were estranged from her, cannot now be ascertained.‡



† See Appendix B.
‡ Mrs. Shakespear, widow, was buried at Stratford in 1623.

Of Shakespear's *moral* character, we know little. It *might* deserve all the praises bestowed upon it by modern writers; but there is greater probability in supposing that it was not wholly untainted by the vices of the period. On his honesty, or his justice, no censure has been past even by tradition; but tradition does say that he was not averse to the bottle, or to pursuits still more criminal. And we have more than tradition for the assertion. Among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, a diary was some years ago discovered *, containing an anecdote of Shakespear by a contemporary. Its purport is, that a lady having made an assignation with Burbage, the performer of Richard III., desired him to come in that character to her in the course of the night. Shakespear, hearing the assignation, went before Burbage, and was admitted. Soon afterwards Burbage came, and announced himself as Richard III.; but Shakespear returned for answer, that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. † We do not vouch for the truth of this anecdote; still we cannot see on what principle it can be set aside. There are some circumstances, too, which confirm it. It is related on the authority of a Mr. Tooley, and this Tooley was certainly the apprentice of Burbage. Again, Burbage was the original Richard III., which had been produced long before the anecdote was written; it had been printed in 1597, and acted, perhaps, many times before that year.

But is there nothing in the works of this celebrated man to justify the suspicion of immorality?

Whoever has looked into the original editions of his dramas, will be disgusted with the obscenity of his

* Collier's Annals of the Stage, vol. i.

† "March 13. 1601. Upon a time when Burbidge played Richard III., there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him, that before she went from the play, she appointed him to come that night unto her, by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespear, overhearing their conclusion, went before, and was entertained ere Burbidge came. Then message being brought that Richard III. was at the door, Shakespear caused answer to be made, that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. — Shakespear's name was *William* — Mr. Tooley " The writer of the diary is unknown; but he appears, says Mr. Collier, to have been a barrister.

allusions. They absolutely teem with the grossest impurities, — more gross by far than can be found in any contemporary dramatist. Whalley, indeed, speaks of his "remarkable modesty;" but, as a modern critic observes*, we shall be at a loss to discover it. "His offensive metaphors and allusions," says another †, "are undoubtedly more frequent than those of all his predecessors or contemporaries." We may add, that his allusions in other respects are in the highest degree censurable. As a late admirable writer ‡ has said of him, he "is, in truth, the Coryphæus of profanation. Texts of Scripture are adduced by him with the most wanton levity; and, like his own Hal, he has led to *damnable iteration*." As Ben Jonson, so we hope Shakespear, repented of his profaneness; though assuredly, in the latter case, no record of repentance is to be found on earth.

But his sonnets have been supposed, and perhaps with justice, to be the best mirror of his sentiments, his feelings, his character. On this subject much ingenuity has been expended,—and, in our opinion, vainly expended. We cannot adapt any one of those productions to the known circumstances of his life. Yet from the earnestness, the fervour, the perseverance of the writer in addressing some unknown, frail beauty, there can, we think, be little doubt that he maintained a vicious connection with her. The progress of his passion, from its first guilty opening to its still more guilty fruition, seems to be portrayed in colours distinguished alike for their fidelity and licentiousness. Then there are reproaches for her infidelity towards *himself*, with, however, some strange excuses for her: —

"Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits
When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
Thy beauty and thy years full well befits;
For still temptation follows where thou art.

* Gifford's Life of Ben Jonson.

† Steevens. Strange that Warburton should be as ignorant as Whalley, of the obscene character of our poet's dramas.

‡ Gifford's Ben Jonson, vol. i.

Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won;
Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd:
And when a woman woos, what woman's son
Will surely leave her till she have prevail'd?
Ah me! but yet thou mightst, my sweet, forbear,
And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
Who lead thee in thy riot ever there
Where thou art forced to break a two-fold truth:
Hers, by thy beauty tempting me to thee,
Thine, by thy beauty being false to me."

This appears to be sufficiently explicit; nor is there much reason in supposing that such language was ever addressed to "airy nothing."

In these sonnets, however, all is not licentious, — at least, so far as the mere language is concerned; and when we read such stanzas as the following, we can only regret that they were not addressed by a different man to a different person: —

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, a few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sun-set fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all the rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

"No longer mourn for me, when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly, sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell.
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.

Oh if (I say) you look upon this verse
When I, perhaps, compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
But let your love even with my life decay."

It is impossible to read these effusions of Shakespear's genius without melancholy feelings. His principles, alas! were not equal to his intellectual gifts. Verses such as these—and we could quote many stronger—could not, we repeat, be addressed to an "airy nothing:" they were addressed to flesh and blood. There is, indeed, reason to suspect that the wife and children of the poet were never allowed to reside with, perhaps not even to visit, him in London. This is confirmed by more than one circumstance. Among the most corroborative is the one, that after 1584 we read of no more children borne to him by his lawful wife. How account for this except on the hypothesis of a separation? In little more than two years, viz. from 1582 to the close of 1584, she bore him three children; yet after the birth of Judith we hear of no more. Had there been any more, their names would appear in the register either of Stratford or of some other church: had there been more, we should assuredly have heard of them, or seen some mention of them in his will. This fact alone will, we submit, justify the inference that Shakespear's wife did not reside in London; that she remained at Stratford, while he pursued his dramatic avocations in a city at no period much distinguished for the moral virtues, and *then* more corrupt perhaps than at any other time.

So much for the life, so much for the *moral* character of Shakespear. In conformity with the established practice, it may be right to say something of his *intellectual*. The subject has little novelty to recommend it; and we shall be as compendious as possible.

The *learning* of Shakespear is a subject that has occupied a hundred ingenious pens. At the first view, it might seem impossible that one, whose father's circumstances were so straitened, who married at so early an age, and who embraced a profession above all others favourable to dissipation, should have the means of col-

lecting much store of knowledge. Yet many writers, ignorant of the sources whence the plots of his dramas were derived, have stoutly contended for his erudition. Even Pope will not allow him to want learning:—

"But as to his *want of learning*, it may be necessary to say something more; there is certainly a vast difference between *learning* and *languages*. How far he was ignorant of the latter, I cannot determine; but it is plain he had much reading at least, if they will not call it learning. Nor is it any great matter, if a man has knowledge, whether he has it from one language or from another. Nothing is more evident than that he had a taste of natural philosophy, mechanicks, ancient and modern history, poetical learning, and mythology: we find him very knowing in the customs, rites, and manners of antiquity. In Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar, not only the spirit, but manners, of the Romans are exactly drawn; and still a nicer distinction is shown between the manners of the Romans in the time of the former, and of the latter. His reading in the ancient historians is no less conspicuous, in many references to particular passages. and the speeches copied from Plutarch in Coriolanus may, I think, as well be made an instance of his learning, as those copied from Cicero in Catiline of Ben Jonson's. The manners of other nations in general, the Egyptians, Venetians, French, &c., are drawn with equal propriety. Whatever object of nature, or branch of science, he either speaks of or describes, it is always with competent, if not extensive knowledge: his descriptions are still exact; all his metaphors appropriated, and remarkably drawn from the true nature and inherent qualities of each subject. When he treats of ethick or politick, we may constantly observe a wonderful justness of distinction, as well as extent of comprehension. No one is more a master of the poetical story, or has more frequent allusions to the various parts of it: Mr. Waller (who has been celebrated for this last particular) has not shown more learning this way than Shakspeare. We have translations from Ovid published in his name, among those poems which pass for his, and for some of which we have undoubted authority (being published by himself, and dedicated to his noble patron the earl of Southampton): he appears also to have been conversant in Plautus, from whom he has taken the plot of one of his plays: he follows the Greek authors, and particularly Dares Phrygius, in another (although I will not pretend to say in what language he read them). The modern Italian writers of *novels* he was manifestly ac-

quainted with: and we may conclude him to be no less conversant with the ancients of his own country, from the use he has made of Chaucer in Troilus and Cressida, and in the Two Noble Kinsmen, if that play be his, as there goes a tradition it was (and indeed it has little resemblance of Fletcher, and more of our author than some of those which have been received as genuine)."

All this shows what we did not expect to find in Pope, — an almost entire ignorance of our early literature. Of the manners of antiquity, Shakespear knew only what he learned from Plutarch through the medium of sir Thomas North's translation.* The translations from Ovid were the work of Thomas Heywood. Of Plautus he knew nothing except what he had learned from a translation of Menœchmi, published soon after the middle of the sixteenth century, and serving, we are told, as the foundation of his *Comedy of Errors*. More probably, however, this comedy was immediately founded on another, *The History of Error*, performed as early as 1576. Lastly, omitting all mention of Dares Phrygius, of whom he had probably never heard, though he knew *The Troy Boke* of Lydgate, he was acquainted with the Italian novelists no farther than could be afforded by the *Palace of Pleasure*, — a work published before he was born, and containing many tales from Boccaccio and other writers. After all, the question as to Shakespear's learning ought to be settled by the authority of Ben Jonson, — a judge, if there ever was one. The passage, however, is not always quoted right: "He has small Latin and less Greek," appears to be less correct than "He has small Latin and *no* Greek." To readers, however, who will obstinately reject this authority, we recommend the celebrated essay of Dr. Farmer, — an essay which, in the estimation of every reasonable man, has set the controversy at rest. *It* must render superfluous all that *we* could say.†

If Shakespear had little of what the world calls

* 1579. Yet this was only a translation of a translation: it was immediately derived, not from the Greek, but from the French of Amyot.
† See Appendix C.

learning, he had less of *invention*, so far as regards the fables of his plays. For every one of them he was, in some degree, indebted to a preceding piece. We will briefly advert to them; and, that we may not have to travel again over the same ground, we will add some observations of a more critical nature. 1. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (a very poor drama) is indebted for many of its incidents to two works — the Arcadia of Sydney, and the Diana of Montemayor.* By some commentators, however, this drama has been held not to be authentic — to be unworthy of Shakespear's genius. It certainly would be no great honour to any writer; though, as Johnson observes, it has some lines and passages which, singly considered, are "eminently beautiful." It has some also, we think, which Shakespear only could have written; and for this reason we will not be so rash as to deny him the paternity. If, as was probably the case, it was one of his earliest productions, we may account for its comparative want of merit, without so arbitrary an hypothesis. Great as was his genius, we cannot, surely, imagine that it was not capable of improvement. His mind was as progressive as that of others; and, like others, he doubtless smiled, in mature age, at the essays of his youth. Yet we should by no means contend that he wrote the *whole*, or even the greater part, of this drama. During the earlier years of his professional career, he rather improved the inventions of others, than invented himself. It was easier for him to remodel old pieces, than to write new ones. Hence the reproach of Greene†, that he was beautified by the feathers of others. Whether this be one of the dramas thus improved, we can never know.

2. *The Comedy of Errors*, as we have before observed, was somewhat indebted to the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, which had been translated some years before Shakespear left Stratford. Yet, whether he (if he were the author) was immediately indebted to it, or to a

* A translation of at least part of this work was known during the last decade of the sixteenth century.

† See before, page 33.

comedy founded on it, entitled *The History of Error*, and performed before queen Elizabeth in 1576, is doubtful. The latter hypothesis is the more probable; for though there is some, there is much less, resemblance between this comedy and the published imitation of the *Menæchmi* than we might have expected to find.* Still this drama, however superior it might be to the piece on which it was founded, is among the lowest of the compositions attributed to him, and probably for the same reason as we have assigned for the preceding, — that it was one of his earliest. It is more unworthy of his genius than even *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. If internal evidence is to decide the question, it cannot be Shakespear's: at least, he did no more than slightly retouch it, — probably at the request of the manager.

3. *Love's Labour Lost* is believed to be one of the earliest of Shakespear's productions: it is certainly one of his second rate. It has many imperfect metres, many rhyming verses, little vigour in the dialogue, but some little discrimination in the characters. Probably the foundation of the piece was not his. We read, indeed, of an old play of *Holofernes*, acted before the princess Elizabeth as early as 1556; and on this, we have little doubt, the comedy before us was based. In fact there is no one drama of our author prior to 1600, — perhaps not one after that year, — that was not derived from some other play. There is, however, a wide difference in the amount of obligation. During the earlier years of his dramatic career, he did little more than *alter* a piece that had become obsolete; in the later period, he omitted, enlarged, corrected, and frequently retained the plot only, — that, too, being greatly modified to meet his own views of improvement.

In these alterations, however, he did not always exhibited judgment, except in what regarded stage effect,

* Six Old Plays, on which Shakespear founded his Measure for Measure — Comedy of Errors — Taming the Shrew — King John — K. Henry IV. and K. Henry V. — King Lear." 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1779.

of which he was a consummate master. With all his genius, he was studious of popular applause.

4. *The Merchant of Venice,* one of the earliest dramas which we can certainly declare to be Shakespear's, was derived partly from the Pecorone of Giovanni Fiorentino; partly from the Gesta Romanorum, an old English ballad, and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta.* The chief of its incidents,—the forfeit of the pound of flesh to the Jew,—appears to have been known in every country. It certainly travelled into Europe from the East; for the Arabians have a story very much like it. Probably, however, Shakespear was not immediately indebted for his fable to any of the sources we have mentioned, but to some play then existing in our language. This conjecture is supported by the fact that in Gosson's *School of Abuse,* published as early as 1579, there is a distinct allusion to a play containing some of the characteristic incidents in this *Merchant of Venice.* Monstrously improbable as is the incident in question, this drama will always be read with pleasure. We do not, however, think that the Jew of Shakespear is more energetically drawn than the Jew of Marlowe.* As a work of art, however, the former is immeasurably superior to the latter, especially in the comic scenes, for which Marlowe had no talent.

5. *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* one of the most poetical of Shakespear's dramas. How vividly he brings before us the popular belief in the existence of other beings than men in this our earthly dwelling! The fable is not now, indeed, considered his. Mr. Tyrrwhit supposes one part of it (the quarrels between Oberon and Titania) to be taken from the Pluto and Proserpina of Chaucer. We do not think so; nor do we conceive that Greene's *James the Fourth,* though much more kindred to this drama, was the original: both derived their materials from some common source. Whether that source can ever be discovered, we know not; but

* See before, p. 57.

until it be, Greene may have the credit of affording the hint to his immortal successor.

But what is this, compared with the execution of that splendid drama? Ages may pass away before we can hope to see one like it. Nothing that has since appeared approximates to it, except the *Manfred* of Byron.

6. *The Taming of a Shrew* is chiefly founded on an older comedy of that name, inserted in the Six Old Plays, to which we have before alluded. But though there is some humour in the older piece, it is immeasurably inferior to the later drama. To show the justice of this opinion, let us select two or three parallel scenes.

From the Old Play.

"*Enter a Tapster, beating out of his doores* SLIE *drunken.*

"*Taps.* You whoreson drunken slave, you had best be gone,
And empty your drunken panch somewhere else,
For in this house thou shalt not rest to night. [*Exit Tapster.*
"*Slie.* Tilly vally, by crisee Tapster Ile fese you anone,
Fills the tother pot, and all 's paid for looke you,
I doe drinke it of mine owne instigation, [*Omne bene.*
Heere Ile lie awhile: why Tapster I say,
Fill s a fresh cushen heere,
Heigh ho, heere 's good warme lying. [*He falls asleepe.*

"*Enter a Nobleman and his Men from hunting.*

"*Lord.* Now that the gloomy shallow of the night,
Longing to view *Orions* drisling lookes
Leapes from th' antarticke world unto the skie,
And dims the welkin with her pitchie breath,
And darkesome night oreshades the cristall heavens,
Heere breake we off our hunting for to night.
Couple uppe the hounds and let us hie us home,
And bid the huntsman see them meated well,
For they have all deserv'd it well to daie.
But soft, what sleepie fellow is this lies heere?
Or is he dead, see one what dooeth lacke?
"*Serv.* My lord, 't is nothing but a drunken sleepe,
His head is too heavie for his bodie,
And he hath drunke so much that he can go no furder.
"*Lord.* Fie, how the slavish villaine stinkes of drinke.
Ho, sirha arise. What so sound asleepe?
Goe take him up, and beare him to my house,

And beare him easily for feare he wake,
And in my fairest chamber make a fire,
And set a sumptuous banquet on the boord,
And put my richest garments on his backe,
Then set him at the table in a chaire:
When that is done, against he shall awake,
Let heavenly musicke play about him still,
Go two of you away, and beare him hence,
And then Ile tell you what I have devisde,
But see in any case you wake him not. [*Exeunt two with* Slie.
Now take my cloke, and give me one of yours,
All fellowes now, and see you take me so:
For we will waite upon this drunken man,
To see his countenance when he doth awak
And find himselfe clothed in such attire,
With heavenly musicke sounding in his eares,
And such a banquet set before his eyes,
The fellow sure will think[illegible] is in heaven,
But we will about him when he wakes,
And see you call him Lord at every word,
And offer thou him his horse to ride abroad,
And thou his hawkes and houndes to hunt the deere,
And I will aske what sutes he meanes to weare,
And what so ere he saith, see you doo not laugh,
But still persuade him that he is a lord.

From Shakespear.

Ente Hostess [illegible] Sl.

" *Sly.* I'll pheese you, in faith.

" *Host.* A pair of stocks, you rogue!

" *Sly.* Y'are a baggage; the Slies are no rogues. Look in the chronicles, we came in with Richard Conqueror. Therefore, *paucas pallabris;* let the world slide. *Sessa!*

" *Host.* You will not pay for the glasses you have burst?

" *Sly.* No, not a denier: Go by S. Jeronimy; — Go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

" *Host.* I know my remedy, I must go fetch the third-borough. [*Exit.*

" *Sly.* Third, or fourth, or fifth borough, I'll answer him by law: I'll not budge an inch, boy; let him come, and kindly. [*Lies down on the ground, and falls asleep.*

" *Wild Horns. Enter a Lord from hunting, with Huntsman and Servants.*

" *Lord.* Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds: Brach Merriman, — the poor cur is emboss'd,

And couple Clowder with the deep-mouth'd brach.
Saw'st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good
At the hedge corner, in the coldest fault?
I would not lose that dog for twenty pound.
"1 *Hun.* Why, Belman is as good as he, my lord;
He cried upon it at the merest loss,
And twice to-day picked out the dullest scent:
Trust me, I take him for the better dog.
"*Lord.* Thou art a fool; if Echo were as fleet,
I would esteem him worth a dozen such.
But sup them well, and look unto them all;
To-morrow I intend to hunt again.
"1 *Hun.* I will, my lord.
"*Lord.* What 's here? one dead or drunk? See, doth he breathe?
"2 *Hun.* He breathes, my lord: Were he not warm'd with ale,
This were a bed but cold to sleep so soundly.
"*Lord.* O monstrous beast! how like a swine he lies!
Grim death, how foul and loathsome is thine image!
Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man. ——
What think you, if he were convey'd to bed,
Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
A most delicious banquet by his bed,
And brave attendants near him when he wakes,
Would not the beggar then forget himself?
"1 *Hun.* Believe me, lord, I think he cannot choose.
"2 *Hun.* It would seem strange unto him when he wak'd.
"*Lord.* Even as a flattering dream or worthless fancy.
Then take him up, and manage well the jest: —
Carry him gently to my fairest chamber,
And hang it round with all my wanton pictures:
Balm his foul head with warm distilled waters,
And burn sweet wood to make the lodging sweet:
Procure me musick ready when he wakes,
To make a dulcet and a heavenly sound;
And if he chance to speak, be ready straight,
And, with a low submissive reverence,
Say, — What is it your honour will command?
Let one attend him with a silver bason,
Full of rose-water, and bestrew'd with flowers;
Another bear the ewer, the third a diaper,
And say, — Will 't please your lordship cool your hands?
Some one be ready with a costly suit,
And ask him what apparel he will wear;
Another tell him of his hounds and horse,

And that his lady mourns at his disease:
Persuade him, that he hath been lunatick;
And, when he says he is —, say, that he dreams,
For he is nothing but a mighty lord.
This do, and do it kindly, gentle sirs;
It will be pastime passing excellent,
If it be husbanded with modesty."

The behaviour of the tinker, on his being suddenly awaked by the music, is thus described: —

In the Old Play.

" *Enter the Lord and his Men.*

" *Lord.* How now, what is all things readie?
" *One.* Yea my lord.
" *Lord.* Then sound the musicke and Ile wake him strait,
And see you doe as earst I gave in charge.
My lord, my lord, he sleeps soundly, my lord.
" *Slie.* Tapster, gives a little smal ale: Heigh ho.
" *Lord.* Heere 's wine, my lord, the purest of the grape.
" *Slie.* For which lord?
" *Lord.* For your honor, my lord.
" *Slie.* Who I, am I a lord? Jesus! what fine apparell have I got?
" *Lord.* More richer far your honour hath to weare,
And if it please you I will fetch them straight.
" *Wil.* And if your honour please to ride abroad,
Ile fetch your lustie steedes more swift of pace
Then winged *Pegasus* in all his pride,
That ran so swiftlie over Persian plaines.
" *Tom.* And if your honour please to hunt the deere,
Your hounds stand readie cuppled at the doore,
Who in running will oretake the row,
And make the long breathde tygre broken winded.
" *Slie.* By the masse I thinke I am a lord indeed,
Whats thy name?
" *Lord.* *Simon* and if it please your honour.
" *Slie.* *Sim,* that as much to say *Simion* or *Simon,*
Put forth thy hand and fill the pot.
Give me thy hand, *Sim;* am I a lord indeed?
" *Lord.* I my gracious lord, and your lovely ladie
Long time hath mourned for your absence heere.
And now with joy behold where she dooth come
To gratulate your honour's safe returne.

Enter the Boy in Womans attire.

"*Slie.* *Sim*, is this she?

"*Lord.* I my lord.

"*Slie.* Masse tis a pretty wench, whats her name?

"*Boy.* Oh that my lovelie lord would once vouchsafe
To looke on me and leave these frantike fits,
Or were I now but halfe so eloquent,
To paint in words what Ile performe in deedes,
I know your honour then would pittie me.

"*Slie.* Harke you mistresse, will you eate a peece of bread?
Come sit downe on my knee, *Sim* drinke to hir *Sim*,
For she and I will go to bed anon.

"*Lord.* May it please you, your honors plaiers be come
To offer your honour a plaie.

"*Slie.* A plaie *Sim*, O brave, be they my plaiers?

"*Lord.* I my lord.

"*Slie.* Is there not a foole in the plaie?

"*Lord.* Yes my lord.

"*Slie.* When will they plaie *Sim?*

"*Lord.* Even when it please your honor, they be readie.

"*Boy.* My lord, Ile go bid them begin their plaie.

"*Slie.* Doo, but looke that you come againe.

"*Boy.* I warrant you my lord, I will not leave you thus.
[*Exit* Boy.

"*Slie.* Come *Sim*, where be the plaiers? *Sim* stand by me,
And weele flowt the plaiers out of their coates."

Compare this scene, which is certainly not without merit, with the more graphic as well as more humorous one in

Shakespear.

"A Bedchamber in the Lord's House.

"SLY *is discovered in a rich night-gown, with Attendants; some with apparel, others with bason, ewer, and other appurtenances. Enter Lord, dressed like a servant.*

"*Sly.* For God's sake, a pot of small ale.

"1 *Serv.* Will 't please your lordship drink a cup of sack?

"2 *Serv.* Will 't please your honour taste of these conserves?

"3 *Serv.* What raiment will your honour wear to-day?

"*Sly.* I am Christophero Sly; call not me — honour, nor lordship · I never drank sack in my life; and if you give me any conserves, give me conserves of beef: Ne'er ask me what rament I 'll wear; for I have no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet;

nay, sometimes, more feet than shoes, or such shoes as my toes look through the overleather.

" *Lord.* Heaven cease this idle humour in your honour!
O, that a mighty man, of such descent,
Of such possessions, and so high esteem,
Should be infused with so foul a spirit!

" *Sly.* What, would you make me mad? Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath; by birth a pedler, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker? Ask Marian Hacket, the fat alewife of Wincot, if she know me not: if she say I am not fourteen pence on the score for sheer ale, score me up for the lyingest knave in Christendom. What, I am not bestraught: Here's ——

" 1 *Serv.* O, this it is that makes your lady mourn.

" 2 *Serv.* O, this it is that makes your servants droop.

" *Lord.* Hence comes it that your kindred shun your house,
As beaten hence by your strange lunacy
O, noble lord, bethink thee of thy birth,
Call home thy ancient thoughts from banishment,
And banish hence these abject lowly dreams:
Look how thy servants do attend on thee,
Each in his office ready at thy beck.
Will't thou have musick? hark! Apollo plays, [*Musick.*
And twenty caged nightingales do sing;
Or wilt thou sleep? we'll have thee to a couch,
Softer and sweeter than the lustful bed
On purpose trimm'd up for Semiramis.
Say, thou wilt walk; we will bestrew the ground:
Or wilt thou ride? thy horses shall be trapp'd,
Their harness studded all with gold and pearl.
Dost thou love hawking? thou hast hawks will soar
Above the morning lark: Or thou wilt hunt?
Thy hounds shall make the welkin answer them,
And fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth.

" 1 *Serv.* Say, thou wilt course; thy grey hounds are as swift
As breathed stags, ay, fleeter than the roe.

" 2 *Serv.* Dost thou love pictures? we will fetch thee straight
Adonis, painted by a running brook:
And Cytherea all in sedges hid;
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath,
Even as the waving sedges play with wind.

" *Lord.* We'll show thee Io, as she was a maid;
And how she was beguiled and surpris'd,
As lively painted as the deed was done.

" 3 *Serv.* Or Daphne, roaming through a thorny wood;

Scratching her legs that one shall swear she bleeds:
And at that sight shall sad Apollo weep,
So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn.
" *Lord.* Thou art a lord, and nothing but a lord:
Thou hast a lady far more beautiful
Than any woman in this waning age.
" 1 *Serv.* And, till the tears that she hath shed for thee,
Like envious floods, o'er-ran her lovely face,
She was the fairest creature in the world;
And yet she is inferior to none.
" *Sly.* Am I a lord? and have I such a lady?
Or do I dream? or have I dream'd till now?
I do not sleep. I see, I hear, I speak;
I smell sweet savours, and I feel soft things: —
Upon my life, I am a lord indeed;
And not a tinker, nor Christophero Sly. —
Well, bring our lady hither to our sight;
And once again, a pot o' the smallest ale.
" 2 *Serv.* Will 't please your mightiness to wash your hands?
[*Servants present an ewer, bason, and napkin.*
O, how we joy to see your wit restor d!
O, that once more you knew but what you are are!
These fifteen years you have been in a dream;
Or, when you wak'd, so wak'd as if you slept.
" *Sly.* These fifteen years! by my fay, a goodly nap.
But did I never speak of all that time?
" 1 *Serv.* O, yes, my lord; but very idle words: —
For though you lay here in this goodly chamber,
Yet would you say, yewere beaten out of door;
And rail upon the hostess of the house;
And say, you would present her at the leet,
Because she brought stone jugs and no seal'd quarts:
Sometimes you would call out for Cicely Hacket.
" *Sly.* Ay, the woman's maid of the house.
" 3 *Serv.* Why, sir, you know no house, nor no such maid;
Nor no such men, as you have reckon'd up, —
As Stephen Sly, and old John Naps of Greece,
And Peter Turf, and Henry Pimpernell;
And twenty more such names and men as these,
Which never were, nor no man ever saw.
" *Sly.* Now, Lord be thanked for my good amends!
" *All.* Amen.
" *Sly.* I thank thee; thou shalt not lose by it.

" *Enter the Page, as a lady, with Attendants.*

" *Page.* How fares my noble lord?
" *Sly.* Marry, I fare well; for here is cheer enough.
Where is my wife?

"*Page.* Here, noble lord: What is thy will with her?
"*Sly* Are you my wife, and will not call me — husband?
My men should call me — lord; I am your good-man.
"*Page.* My husband and my lord, my lord and husband;
I am your wife in all obedience.
"*Sly.* I know it well: — What must I call her?
"*Lord.* Madam.
"*Sly.* Al'ce madam, or Joan madam?
"*Lord.* Madam, and nothing else; so lords call ladies.
"*Sly.* Madam wife, they say that I have dream'd and slept
Above some fifteen year and more.
"*Page.* Ay, and the time seems thirty unto me;
Being all this time abandon'd from your bed.
"*Sly.* 'T is much; — Servants, leave me and her alone. —
Madam, undress you, and come now to bed.
"*Page.* Thrice noble lord, let me entreat of you,
To pardon me yet for a night or two;
Or, if not so, until the sun be set·
For your physicians have expressly charg'd,
In peril to incur your former malady,
That I should yet absent me from your bed:
I hope this reason stands for my excuse.
"*Sly.* Ay, it stands so, that I may hardly tarry so long. But I would be loath to fall into my dreams again; I will therefore tarry, in despite of the flesh and the blood.

"*Enter a Servant.*

"*Serv.* Your honour's players, hearing your amendment.
Are come to play a pleasant comedy,
For so your doctors hold it very meet;
Seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood,
And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy,
Therefore, they thought it good you hear a play,
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
Which bars a thousand harms, and lengthens life.
"*Sly.* Marry I will; let them play it: Is not a commonty a Christmas gambol, or a tumbling trick?
"*Page.* No, my good lord; it is more pleasing stuff.
"*Sly.* What, household stuff?
"*Page.* It is a kind of history.
"*Sly.* Well, we'll see 't: Come, madam wife, sit by my side, and let the world slip; we shall ne'er be younger.
[*They sit down.*"

7. ***Romeo and Juliet*** has entirely an Italian foundation. The story was first related, we believe, by a novelist of Vicenza, as early as 1535; certainly it

formed the subject of a novel of Bandello, printed in 1554. Bristeau, a French novelist, soon gave it a French form; and Arthur Brooke, in 1562, transferred it into English verse. Painter also, in the *Palace of Pleasure*, took his story, *Rhomeo and Julietta*, from the French, and not from the Italian novel. Shakespear followed Brooke, but admitted some things from Painter. If this were the proper place for such a display, it would not be difficult to show where the novelist of Vicenza (Luigi da Porto) and Bandello derived their materials for a story which is nearly European; but this must be left to the historian of general fiction. The genius of Shakespear cannot suffer from the fact that he borrowed the foundation of all his plots. What others left unfinished, he perfected: he turned the dross of others into fine gold. Thus it is in regard to *The Taming of a Shrew*: thus it is in regard to every other drama which he undertook to improve.

8. *As You Like It*, in so far as the plot is concerned, has no more claim to originality than any of the preceding: it is founded on a novel of Thomas Lodge, entitled *Rosalind*. "Shakespear," says Malone, "has followed Lodge's novel more exactly than is his general custom when he is indebted to such worthless originals: he has sketched some of its principal characters, and borrowed a few expressions from it." To those characters he has added three, — Jaques, the Clown, and Audrey. The fable, says Johnson, is "wild and pleasing." Part of this piece must, consequently, be conceded to Lodge; but the dialogue, the wit, the animation, the knowledge of human nature, are the dramatist's.

9. The plot of *Much ado About Nothing* has been generally thought to be derived from Ariosto. It is taken, however, from a novel of Belleforest, who had translated it from Bandello. Probably, however, the *Genevra* of Turberville may have been more immediately before the eye of Shakespear. At any rate, the story is old enough; it is to be found more or less ex-

emplified in Italian, French, German, and even English novelists.

10. The foundation of *Hamlet* is, as every scholar knows, to be found in Saxo Grammaticus? Now, as Saxo has never been translated into English even at this day, no doubt was entertained that Shakespear was conversant with the original Latin. The fact, however, is, that the whole story was translated into French by Belleforest as early as 1564; and from French into English soon afterwards, under the title "Historie of Hamblet." There was, however, a play founded on this very story prior to Shakespear's (as early as 1589); but how far he was indebted to it, must be for ever unknown, unless it happen to be hereafter discovered.

11, 12. For *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* which tradition asserts was composed at the express command of queen Elizabeth, who wished to see Falstaff in love, Shakespear was partly indebted to a translation of the *Pecorino,* partly to another story once common in our literature, and partly to Tarleton's *News out of Purgatory.* But the major part of the incidents, the whole of the sentiments, the wit, the humour, the comic situations, emanate from his magic pen. — *Troilus and Cressida,* so far as regards the plot, was also Italian: but in this, as in so many other instances, Shakespear referred to more accessible sources, — to Chaucer, and still more to Lydgate's *Boke of Troye.*

13, 14. *Measure for Measure* was not, as Pope conceived, founded on one of Cinthio's novels, but on the play of *Promos and Cassandra,* by George Whetstone. Though this is one of the worst of Shakespear's dramas, still, if compared with that of Whetstone, it will appear to considerable advantage. — *Othello* was derived from one of Cinthio's novels: but, as he knew nothing of Italian, he was, doubtless, indebted to an English translation, though no longer extant, or at least known to exist. A French translation, very free in its character, appeared in 1584; and some of the incidents of the story are certainly to be found in more than one

English work. This is one of the most perfect dramas ever devised by genius. Its beauties, as Johnson observes, "impress themselves so strongly on the attention of the reader, that they can draw no aid from critical illustration. The fiery openness of Othello, magnanimous, artless, and credulous, boundless in his confidence, ardent in his affection, inflexible in his resolution, and obdurate in his revenge; the cool malignity of Iago, silent in his resentment, subtle in his designs, and studious at once of his interest and his vengeance; the soft simplicity of Desdemona, confident of merit, and conscious of innocence,— her artless perseverance of her suit, and her slowness to suspect that she can be suspected; are such proofs of Shakespear's skill in human nature, as, I think, it is vain to seek in any modern writer."

15, 16. The fable of *Lear* is chiefly drawn from Geoffrey of Monmouth; yet Shakespear, *more suo*, did not so much recur to the British chronicler as to a play already existing on the same subject, and contained in the volume of *Six Old Plays* to which we have alluded. Some hints he might derive from Geoffrey, or rather from Hollinshed, and some from the *Arcadia* and the *Mirror of Magistrates*.—The foundation of *Alls well that ends well* is in Boccaccio; but Shakespear, who knew nothing of the Italian, ran immediately to the same piece in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*: there the story is called *Giletta of Narbon*. This drama is much inferior to the preceding. It has less interest in every way, and less knowledge of human nature.

17. *Macbeth*, one of the noblest productions of human genius, is, as every body knows, founded on Scottish history. The main incidents of the story are in Hector Boece; but of Hector Shakespear knew as much as he did of Hesiod: here Hollinshed again served him as a guide. It should be generally known that Macbeth, like our William the Conqueror, had some claim to the crown. His mother was the *second* daugh-

ter of Malcolm II., while Duncan was the son of the *elder*. It is remarkable that Buchanan thought the subject a fit one for the stage: "Multa hic fabulose quidem nostrorum affingunt; sed quia *theatris* aut Milesiis fabulis aptiora sunt quam historiæ, ea omitto." Little did the old pedagogue know how soon the most glorious of tragedies was to be founded on those fabulous circumstances.

But a question here occurs, of more interest than the preceding. Did Shakespear borrow any part of this celebrated tragedy from *The Witch?* or did Middleton borrow from *Macbeth?* According to Stephens, the bard of Avon was not the original. But how can this be ascertained? *The Witch* was not, so far as we know, performed; and it was certainly not printed until about half a century ago. Now, as Middleton commenced writing for the stage long after Shakespear, and survived him at least fourteen years, it would be more reasonable to infer that *he* was the borrower. That such was the fact, we have no doubt. The reader, however, who wishes to judge for himself, may find abundant materials for the purpose in the last edition of Malone's Shakespear, by Boswell.*

18, 19, 20. *Twelfth Night*, so far as regards the serious portions, was remotely derived from Bandello, and immediately from Belleforest; but something was, doubtless, borrowed from *The Historie of Apolonius and Silla*, a tale in the collection of Barnabe Riche. But in this, as in all other cases where Shakespear had not some previous drama before him, the *foundation* of the plot is all that is borrowed, and the obligation is exceedingly slight. Most of the characters, most of the plot, the dialogue, the comic humour, are the creation of this author. — *Julius Cæsar* is taken from the Roman historians and Plutarch; but here again an interesting question occurs: Was the earl of Stirling's tragedy of that name in being when Shakespear wrote *his?* And if so, did the latter borrow from it? Here, too, we shall

* Vol. xi. p. 283—293.

afford the reader an opportunity of judging for himself, by throwing into the Appendix some extracts from the Scottish drama.*—*Antony and Cleopatra* has the same foundation, viz. the classic historians. Yet there was a tragedy entitled *Cleopatra*, and another called *Antony*, in being when our author wrote. The former was the production of Daniel; the latter, of lady Pembroke. Her ladyship was little more than a translator of Garnier, whose tragedy had more celebrity than it deserved. To Garnier, too, Daniel was under some obligation; and Shakespear to all the three. There is, however, this remarkable difference between the last and his predecessors, — that, while nobody can possibly read *their* dramas, *his* will be read with interest so long as genius has any charms for men.

21, 22, 23, 24. *Cymbeline* is derived from three sources, — a novel of Boccaccio's, an English tale called *Westward for Smelts*, and Geoffrey's British Chronicle. This is a poor drama, and perhaps one that Shakespear did not compose, but merely improved. — *Timon of Athens* is of the same stamp. It was certainly indebted to a former tragedy of the name, never printed, but well known in MS. The original is a very mediocre production; but Shakespear has much enlarged its sphere of interest by new characters and incidents chiefly taken from Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and the English translation of Plutarch. — *Coriolanus* is derived from Plutarch's life of that hero. It is a noble performance. The old man's merriment in Menenius, the lofty lady's dignity in Volumnia, the bridal modesty in Virgilia, the patrician and military haughtiness in Coriolanus, the plebeian malignity and tribunitian insolence in Brutus and Sicinius, make, says Johnson, a very pleasing and interesting variety. The dignified Roman in the best age of the republic was never so well drawn as in the hero of this drama. —*The Winter's Tale*, as we observed in the sketch of Robert Greene †, is entirely founded on a novel of that

* See Appendix D.

† See before, p 35.

writer. It is unworthy of Shakespear's genius; and we are again tempted to conclude, either that this was one of his earliest productions, (an hypothesis, however, not supported by dates,) or that the substance of it had appeared in some earlier drama.

25, 26, 27. *The Tempest*, one of the most splendid efforts of human genius, was, doubtless, founded on some Italian novel, though that novel has eluded the researches of the most diligent commentators. Some of the thoughts appear to have been taken from Greene's *Alphonsus;* and certainly the names of some among the characters are derived from other sources. But how insignificant the aggregate of all, compared with the noble work which Shakespear has left us! There is more invention in this piece than in any other of his dramas.—*King John* was founded on a former play of that name — perhaps written by Rowley. It is printed in the collection to which we have frequently adverted, — the *Six Old Plays.* Probably there was another play of the same title, different from the one printed by Learcroft: such an impression, at least, is fairly deducible from the notices scattered through the researches of our theatrical antiquaries. The foundation of this, as of all the dramas on the reign of John, is in our old chroniclers.—About *Richard II.* there seems to be a wide field for controversy. There certainly was a play with the same title, very distinct from Shakespear's, and long prior to it. To it there is an allusion by Camden in his annals. And we know that one different from Shakespear's was performed in the year 1611, above ten years after the first edition of this play. Probably Shakespear did no more than alter the one already in possession of the stage. This supposition is confirmed by internal evidence. *Richard II.* is decidedly inferior to some of his other historical plays; and the *manner* seems to be different.

28. The two parts of *Henry IV.* were certainly founded on preceding dramas. The only two, however, of which we have any *positive* notice, are, first, the old

play entitled *The famous Victories of King Henry V.*, which appeared prior to 1589,—yet this, doubtless, furnished our author with many of his characters and incidents; and, secondly, the play of *Sir John Oldcastle.* The *wit*, however, could be furnished by no man: it has never been equalled: in the whole range of the drama there is nothing approaching to it. Whether sir John Falstaff was intended to represent sir John Oldcastle, has been much disputed. There can, however, be no reasonable doubt that such was the fact. The words of Fuller are surely strong enough to set the subject at rest. "Stage poets have themselves been very bold with, and others very sorry at, the memory of sir John Oldcastle, whom they have fancied a boon companion, a jovial royster, and a coward to boot. The best is, sir John Falstaff hath relieved the memory of sir John Oldcastle, and of late is substituted buffoon in his place." As Oldcastle was one of the most staunch followers of Wycliffe, the introduction of his name gave great offence to those of the reformed religion; and it was in conformity with this sentiment that Shakespear substituted that of Falstaff. Even he is thought, and on very plausible grounds, to have retained the former name in the earliest edition of this drama; and to have made the substitution in one of the succeeding.

29. *King Henry V.* was, undoubtedly, founded on preceding dramas with the same title. Nash refers to one which, as early as 1592, must have been well known on the stage, and which had certainly been represented prior to 1588. "What a glorious thing it is to have Henry the Fifth represented on the stage, leading the French king prisoner, and forcing both him and the Dolphin to swear fealty!" In 1594, we find mention of another (if, indeed, it were not the same then first printed)—*The famous Victories of Henry V., containing the honourable Battle of Agincourt.* Between 1596 and 1615, there are *three* more entries of a play with the same title, on the books of the Stationers' Company. One of these was Shakespear's; the two others were by

different pens. In the *Six Old Plays* to which we have so often referred, there is a drama with the same title,—probably the one to which Nash alluded. But in this, as in every parallel case, wide indeed is the difference between Shakespear's drama and that on which he constructed it! "This play has many scenes of high dignity, and many of easy merriment."* It is, however, much inferior to either of the two parts of Henry IV.

30. The three parts of *King Henry VI.* were assuredly not the work of Shakespear, though he retouched all of them, except perhaps the first. The reasoning of Mr. Malone, in his dissertation on the three parts, does not convince us that Shakespear made no addition to the first part. It does, however, convince us that the two other parts were founded on the *First Part of the Contention of the two Houses of York and Lancaster;* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Death of Good King Henry the Sixth.* The former of these old dramas was printed in 1594, the latter in 1595: but both were *represented* long before; since the very titles affirm that they had been "sundry times acted by the earl of Pembroke's servants." We have before noticed the expression used by Greene in his last melancholy letter †,—tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide,—as manifestly taken from the *First Part of the Contention.*

"O tiger's heart, wrapt in a woman's hide!"

The probability is, that Greene and Peele—perhaps, too, Marlowe—had some share in the composition of one or other of those dramas; or else he could not have talked so confidently to the "upstart crow beautified with our feathers." But whoever were the authors, Shakespear certainly made the two dramas the foundation of the two latter parts of *Henry VI.* The passages adduced from them, and from the dramas as improved by our author, by Mr. Malone, must for ever put the matter at rest. ‡

* Dr. Johnson. † See before, p. 33.
‡ Malone's Shakespear, by Boswell, vol. xviii.

31, 32. In *King Richard III.* Shakespear had also prior dramas before him. Some of them are enumerated in the last edition of Malone, by Boswell; and a mutilated copy of one which our dramatist had certainly in view, is printed in the nineteenth volume of that laborious work. But he had also other dramas before him. We need not, however, observe that his amazing superiority will appear as much in the present as in any other instance where a comparison can be instituted.—*King Henry VIII.*, we are told, is the only historical play of Shakspeare which had not a dramatic predecessor. Yet even it had one. Rowley, his contemporary, was the author of *When you see me you know me, or the Famous Chronicle History of King Henry the Eighth;* and it is impossible to believe that this stupid production followed the other.

Titus Andronicus and *Pericles* are certainly not the offspring of Shakespear's genius. No ingenuity can show that there is the least affinity between the minds which produced them and that of our author. Much controversy has, indeed, been expended on it; but, with no other guide than common sense, no man can be at a loss what to think of them. They would disgrace even the third rate dramatists of Shakespear's age.

From the preceding observations it is evident, that for all his plots Shakespear was indebted to other sources; and that sixteen of his dramas, if not more, were immediately constructed on preceding dramas. His obligations in both respects are, no doubt, greater than we at present suspect. If the next half century should witness no diminution of zeal in the efforts of our dramatic antiquaries, new discoveries will, doubtless, confer a greater extent of obligation. But to whatever extent they may be carried, the glory of Shakespear will not be effected by them. Even for invention he will merit greater praise than any dramatist we could mention, with two exceptions,—Lope de Vega and Calderon. But he has other, and, to the dramatist, higher qualities. As Pope observes of him,—

"If ever any author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakspeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of nature; it proceeded through Ægyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakspeare was inspiration indeed: he is not so much an imitator, as an instrument, of nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him."

Of his characters, and his power over the passions, — circumstances which involve so profound a knowledge of human nature, — the same admirable critic observes, —

"His *characters* are so much nature herself, that it is a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image: each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakspeare is as much an individual, as those in life itself: it is as impossible to find any two alike; and such as, from their relation or affinity in any respect, appear most to be twins, will, upon comparison, be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character, we must add the wonderful preservation of it; which is such throughout his plays, that, had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker.

"The *power* over our *passions* was never possessed in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along, there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide our guest to the effect, or be perceived to lead toward it: but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places: we are surprised the moment we weep; and yet upon reflection find the passion so just, that we should be surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.

"How astonishing is it again, that the passions directly opposite to these, — laughter and spleen, — are no less at his command! that he is not more a master of the *great* than of the *ridiculous* in human nature; of our noblest tendernesses, than of our vainest foibles; of our strongest emotions, than of our idlest sensations!"

But the spirit, the talents, the resources of Shakespear, have been best fathomed by Dr. Johnson.

"Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

"Shakspeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world: by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets, a character is too often an individual: in those of Shakspeare it is commonly a species.

"It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakspeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept; and it may be said of Shakspeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and œconomical prudence. But his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the tenour of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

"It will not easily be imagined how much Shakspeare excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authors. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation, that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied to every stage but that of Shakspeare. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard,

upon topicks which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences.

"Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady, and a rival into the fable; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other; to make them meet in rapture, and part in agony; to fill their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered; is the business of a modern dramatist. For this, probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions; and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew, that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

"Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say with Pope, that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because may speeches there are which have nothing characteristical; but, perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

"Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectation of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakspeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: even where the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world. Shakspeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonder; the event which he re-

presents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shewn nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.

"This, therefore, is the praise of Shakspeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; and that he who has mazed his imagination in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world and a professor predict the progress of the passions."

Nor is the comic power of Shakespear inferior to his command over the loftier passions, — over those which are the peculiar province of tragedy: —

"The force of his comick scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dies, bright and pleasing for a while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; and the discrimination of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance that combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespear."

On the other hand, that he has many faults, will be acknowledged by the warmest of his idolaters. In the first place, he has no moral purpose in view; "he sacrifices virtue to convenience." To *please* was his chief object: he paid no attention to that retributive justice which, when human affairs are rightly understood, pervades them all. "We do not like this doctrine of retribution," says one of his critics. Probably

not: but still it exists; and the man who looks into history, or into the course of life, and does not perceive it, cannot be praised for his penetration. Where Shakespear has a maxim, it drops from him by chance: where he has punishment as the fruit of guilt, it is applied, not because there is a moral relation between the two, but because the design of his plot would be frustrated without it. "This fault," as a critic observes, "the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place." Where this high moral is not inculcated,— where the necessary connection between vice and punishment (necessary as that between cause and effect) is disregarded, the drama must be the most pernicious of entertainments: it is not the faithful mirror of human experience; it encourages to evil by the impunity of the guilty; it disheartens the efforts of virtue, by representing them as of little avail in the pursuit of happiness

The plots of Shakespear are not always well framed. He was, indeed, indebted for them to other writers: still he had judgment; and he might easily have given a different direction to many of the incidents, without in the smallest degree impairing the interest of the whole. Of *unity* he had little idea. By this term we do not mean the restrictions of time and place in the classical sense; but the development of one leading action. He has often actions independent of each other, which have no connection with the main one. Now, all should be subsidiary; for if there be a unity of design, there must of necessity be a constant bearing of different incidents towards one common centre. In the other unities of time and place he was faulty. We assuredly have no admiration for the narrow confines of the classical drama; yet there should be a medium between unnatural strictness and excessive laxity. We do not object to an action extending over a few years; but we do object to the same piece witnessing the birth and marriage of a hero.* We do not condemn the

change of scene from Scotland to England; but we do condemn a very frequent change, even in the same country: by it the attention is sure to be bewildered, and the interest impaired.

But the greatest defect of Shakespear is his ignorance or disregard of chronology, geography, the manners, institutions, and opinions of nations. He commits, in all these respects, enormous blunders. Hector quoting Aristotle — a ship wrecked on the coast of Bohemia — the gods invoked by a Christian — are among the more venial. But we need not enumerate them; they are familiar to every reader. Take him, however, for all in all, and there is little exaggeration in the line, that a man may hope

"To rival all but Shakespear's name below."

BEN JONSON.*

(1574—1637.)

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRAMATIC LITERATURE CONTINUED.

Benjamin, or, as he himself frequently abbreviates his name, *Ben, Jonson,* was originally of Scottish descent. His father was of Annandale; subsequently settled at Carlisle; and from thence passed into the service of Henry VIII. Ben was a posthumous child, and was born in Westminster early in the year 1574. He came into the world under no very promising circumstances. Under queen Mary the father had been in prison, — probably on account of his religious principles; and there had lost his worldly substance. Subsequently, in Elizabeth's reign, he had embraced holy orders. His preferment, however, must have been scanty; as his mother was obliged to marry a bricklayer the year after, his birth. We have no reason to suppose that he was neglected by his new guardian: we know that he was sent to a private school near St. Martin's in the Fields; and there he probably acquired as much information as boys of his age and condition in life usually possessed. It could not, however, be expected that a step-father would make the same sacrifices as a natural parent; and his career of learning would have been arrested too

* Our materials for this life are derived from Fuller's Worthies of England; from the Biographia Britannica; from Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary; from Baker's Biographia Dramatica; from Dryden's Essay on Dramatic Poetry; from Malone's Shakespear, by Boswell; from Campbell's Specimens of British Poets; from Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses; from D'Israeli's Quarrels of Authors; from the Prefaces of Theobald and Rowe; and, above all, from Gifford's admirable edition of Ben Jonson.

soon for the world, had not a friend placed him at Westminster school, where the celebrated Camden was the second master. Who this friend was, we are not informed, or his name would be held in grateful remembrance. His kindness did not end here; for through his instrumentality an exhibition was procured for him at Cambridge. The year in which young Ben was matriculated is unknown: probably it was about 1590, when he was in his sixteenth year. He must certainly have made great progress under Camden, who well deserved his grateful acknowledgments: —

> "Camden, most reverend head, to whom I owe
> All that I am in arts, and all I know."

Indeed, as he left college in a short time, — one account says in a few weeks, but this is scarcely probable, — his obligations to Camden will appear the greater. We must, however, lament the necessity that caused his return. It was, doubtless, the poverty of his parents. It forced him to embrace his father's business, a change which could not have been agreeable to him: bricks and mortar on the banks of the Thames, were less attractive than philosophy and the muses on those of the Cam. As a clergyman's son, he must have felt the change more keenly than if his own father had been an artisan. There can be no doubt that he was soon disgusted: "he could not," he afterwards acknowledged, "endure the occupation of a bricklayer;" and he escaped from it by entering as a volunteer into the army employed in Flanders. There was not much wisdom in the step. In the camp he could not improve himself even so much as in his father's house; and his profession was sure to be less profitable. He had no friends, no interest, no hope of advancement; and we cannot be surprised that, after a single campaign, he returned to England. Yet he had no objection to that profession: on the contrary, he liked it; and he would, no doubt, have remained in it, had it held out the least prospect of advantage. From his own account, which there is no reason to dis-

trust, he behaved gallantly. But neither gallantry, nor military merit of any kind, could avail one that had not more powerful recommendations; and he returned home without rank and without money.

The situation of Jonson was, at this time, hopeless enough. He was averse to resume the business of his step-father, who, indeed, at this time, was probably no more; and had he felt no aversion, he had certainly not acquired a knowledge of it sufficient to support him. His most obvious resource was the stage; and, like so many others of the period, he commenced as an actor before he became a writer. In this new profession, if tradition is to be followed, he obtained no distinction. Probably he could not descend to the mean expedients adopted by others, — expedients to captivate the multitude. But, as an actor, neither success nor the want of it would long have availed him; for his career was abruptly terminated by an affair that menaced more serious consequences. He quarrelled with some one, was called out, fought a duel, and killed his adversary, who appears to have been, like himself, a player. Duelling at that time was no better than murder; and the culprit, deeply wounded, was committed to prison. "While here," says his last biographer, "he was visited by a popish priest, who took advantage of the unsettled state of his religious opinions, to subvert his mind, and induce him to renounce the faith in which he had been bred, for the errors of the Romish church." He must, however, have previously sent for the priest, since no ecclesiastic of that communion would, in the then state of the penal laws, run the risk of certain destruction by attempting the conversion of one on whose sentiments he could not depend. The motives to this change have been variously estimated. "It was the fear of impending death," says one class of writers. Surely this could be no reason. He was not likely to make his judges more favourable by the profession of a faith so much disliked by the government: on the contrary, he must have known that, by this step, he should render

them eager for his condemnation. In fact, from the very moment this conversion was known, spies were placed about him; and, but for the timely warning of his gaoler, he would certainly have uttered something that would have rendered him, in the eye of the state, more criminal than he was already—something that would have led him to the stake or the scaffold. Neither is there more wisdom in the assertion of his friend Drummond of Hawthornden, to whom, in after years, he was so imprudently communicative,—that his change was the result of indifference about all religions. Such a man would be sure to remain in the church of the dominant party,— not connect himself with one that brought destruction on its professors. If, then, it was not fear, nor interest, nor indifference, that effected this change, it must have been conviction. But if, in this case, he claims respect for his sincerity,—for sincerity which encompassed him with danger,—we cannot award any praise to his judgment. At this period he could know absolutely nothing of the merits of the controversy between the two churches. His conversion was the result of impulse: yet he could do no more than follow the little knowledge he had; and whether his choice were, or were not, a wise one, he must still claim our respect.

To prevent the necessity of recurring to this subject, we shall here observe, that about the year 1606, Jonson returned to the bosom of the English church. Then his judgment was matured; and, as his reading had been extensive, his second conversion was more honourable to the protestant than his first had been to the Roman catholic communion. Drummond of Hawthornden, indeed, insinuates that it was a matter of policy, since he was still indifferent to the merits of either; but this appears censorious. We have no right to judge of his motives; and, until evidence is adduced to prove the contrary, we ought to give him credit for sincerity.

By what means Jonson escaped the fate which im-

pended over him, we know not: we are even in doubt whether he was brought to his trial. We only read that he was eventually discharged,— probably the prosecution was dropped by his enemies. On his deliverance, he naturally betook himself to his profession, — not, we have reason to think, as an actor, but as a writer for the stage. Though it was a very precarious means of support, it did not prevent him from taking a wife. This has been called by his last biographer one of those "happy modes of extricating himself from a part of his difficulties, which men of genius sometimes adopt." We know not that, by so doing, he added much to his ordinary expenditure: to a young man surrounded by dissipation, as he was, no step could be more advisable: it might lead him to more settled habits; and assuredly it would increase the happiness of one affectionate by nature. She, too, was a Roman catholic. The choice, we were told, did not discredit *his* judgment, though it might *hers*,— for *her* venture was hazardous. We have reason to believe that she supported the difficulties of her situation with patient endurance: her qualities were of the domestic kind,— the most useful for one of his wayward temperament. When this event took place, is matter of conjecture; it must, however, have been as early as 1594, for two years afterwards he was the father of two children.

The pieces which Jonson wrote for representation prior to 1596 have eluded the researches of our dramatic antiquaries. In that year appeared the first of his known comedies, *Every Man in his Humour*. It was well received; but its author endeavoured to improve it by changing the scene and proper names from Italian to English. In adapting it to English taste and English feeling, he has been censured for retaining a passage peculiar to the original characters and manners. This relates to the *poisoning*, so common, we are told, in Italy, but unknown in England. But was it unknown? As Mr. Gifford well observes, "it was unfortunately too well understood and too common in

this country. Elizabeth had a favourite, who, if he is not greatly belied, did not yield to the subtlest poisoner that Italy ever produced." That queen was blamed for not removing Mary of Scotland by "poisoning her garments in the Italian fashion." Whether Elizabeth ever removed her personal enemies in this manner, we know not; but she herself was often apprehensive of the same fate. Once her saddle was poisoned, and two men were hanged for the crime. The arm-chair of her favourite Essex was thus served; and we read of articles of furniture, dress, &c. being burnt by the officers of justice for the same reason. Jonson, therefore, committed no impropriety in retaining the passage.* When the comedy was thus improved, it was again represented, and received with great approbation. It brought the author into fame. Not that he had been previously unknown: if he had written nothing alone, he had certainly written in conjunction with other dramatists of his time,—with Marston, and Chettle, and Decker. But from such pieces, and such associates, little glory could be reaped; and his pride must have been highly gratified by the reception his unassisted labours commanded from the world.

Tradition has recorded, that, for the introduction of *Every Man in his Humour* to the world, our author was indebted to Shakespear. The acquaintance of the latter with Ben Jonson, says Mr. Rowe, "began with a remarkable piece of humanity. Mr. Jonson, who was at that time altogether unknown to the world, had offered one of his plays to the players, to have it acted; and the person into whose hands it was put, after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, was just upon the point of returning it to him with an ill-natured answer, that it would be of no service to their company, when Shakespear luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so sensible in it, as

* The truth of these poisonings is questionable, but there is in them enough to show that the idea of the practice was familiar at the time in England.

to engage him to read it through, and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the public favour." The truth of this relation is disputed by the last biographer of our author: indeed, it presents some difficulties. If, as we know to be the fact, Jonson had laboured in conjunction with such men as Marston, he could not be wholly unknown. Besides, this play was brought out at the Rose theatre,—one with which Shakespear had no manner of connection. Yet some former piece of Jonson's, or at least some one written in conjunction with others, might have been thus noticed by the bard of Avon. There is nothing improbable in the relation; nor is it in the least degree discreditable to Jonson. The other was ten years his senior, and was a veteran in the dramatic art, when he first entered on the profession. Mr. Gifford, indeed, assures us, that at this period (1598), he "was as well known as Shakespear, perhaps better." But this is impossible: Shakespear had, at this time, been at least twelve years connected with the stage, even in London, and we know not how long in the country: add, that he had been ten years one of the proprietors of the Blackfriars, and had written many of his dramas, and the absurdity of the assertion will be sufficiently clear.

In our opinion, Mr. Gifford, or his friend the dean of Westminster, has estimated much too highly this comedy of *Every Man in his Humour*. Wit it certainly has; there is much vivacity of dialogue; and the characters are drawn with considerable power. Still, they are to us artificial: if they ever existed in English society, the period has long vanished. The great defect of this, as of all the other dramas of this author, is, that he took the individual and not the species, that he preferred the exception to the rule. Hence the stiffness, the artifice, inseparable from his comic works. Nothing, as a great critic observes, will please well and long, that is not true to nature; that has not its archetype in general life. It may, indeed, be replied, that the individual must be separated from

the species; otherwise he will have nothing to strike the attention, nothing to rivet the interest. Granted: but this does not compromise the adherence to a known standard. To make a character interesting, yet natural— to invest a man with the attributes of human nature in general, and with the qualities of a particular state of society, yet to leave him something that may distinguish him from his class—is the triumph of art, of judgment, of philosophy. This triumph Jonson has not achieved. He might be, in fact he was, better understood in his own age than he has been since; because his portraits had reference to characters and scenes which no longer exist. But he is not formed for the admiration of posterity. The consequence is, that while the comedies of Shakespear (who, we must not forget, was an actor in this comedy) will be read through all time, *his* are perused seldom, and without much relish. They would, indeed, be read less frequently than they are, did not the reader hope—what, indeed, he is sure—to find, some reflection of the times; some echo of a period in which, as it was a state of transition from general ignorance to learning, from one religion to another, we must ever feel a deep interest.

The success of this piece — and it had no more than it deserved — is said to have provoked the envy of his former associates. To a certain extent this might be; but such a feeling was never yet generated, unless there were other causes at work. The man who bears his glory meekly, will not be envied; at least, he will not be regarded with the bitterness of the feeling. If Marston and Decker became his secret enemies; if a cabal was formed against him; if, as he himself tells us, they began "to provoke him, on every stage, with their petulant styles, as if they wished to single him out for their adversary;" the fault must have been chiefly, if not wholly, in himself. That he was irascible in temper; that he was exceedingly vain; that he was haughty so as frequently to be intolerable,—is the unanimous opinion of tradition; and in this instance tradition

is supported by what little we can collect on the subject. There appears to have been, in his very nature, something so impetuous that he could not be at rest: if he had no individual opponents whom he could expose, he was sure to assail a whole class of society. Yet we do not give any credit to the charge of malignity so liberally bestowed upon him by dramatic historians. He was too generous for the feeling; nor do we think there is evidence to prove that he was the aggressor. No doubt he offended by his satire, — frequently an honest, well-meaning satire,—and when he felt that he was persecuted for it, he became more severe in its application.

In 1599 was performed *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was well received, though its satire displeased many. It, too, has merit. The leading characters, though deviating from such as we find in the world, are drawn with vigour; the exposure of absurd humours is complete; and there is some real though much laboured wit in the dialogue. Yet, as Mr. Gifford himself allows, it is very deficient in interest. "The plot is progressive, but not well combined; the action awkwardly helped forward by the chorus; and the catastrophe, though sufficiently ingenious, not altogether legitimately produced by preceding occurrences." The worst, however, is the epilogue, which was spoken to please Elizabeth, who honoured the representation with her presence. It was full of gross, of disgustingly gross, flattery.

If the preceding comedy be adapted rather for the closet than for the stage, the praise or censure may be applied with still more propriety to his next piece, — *Cynthia's Revels*. It is by far the least interesting of the three. "The plot," says Mr. Gifford, "is so finely spun, that no eye, perhaps, but Jonson's has ever been able to trace it."—"What wit the spectators might find in the solemn buffoonery of the attendant courtiers, I know not; but the reader, to whom it appears unintelligible for want of a few marginal notes, which the

author would not, and the editor cannot, supply, must find it intolerably tedious." But, to us, the most offensive part is where adulation so extravagant is offered to Elizabeth under the name of *Cynthia* : —

"Not without wonder, not without delight,
Mine eyes have view'd, in contemplation's depth,
This work of art, divine and excellent.
What shape, what substance, or what unknown power,
In virgin's habit, crown'd with laurel leaves,
And olive branches woven in between,
On sea-girt rocks like to a goddess shines!
O front! O face! O all celestial, sure,
And more than mortal! Arete, behold
Another Cynthia, and another queen,
Whose glory, like a lasting plenilune,
Seems ignorant of what it is to wane.
Not, under heaven, an object could be found
More fit to please."

"Heaven's purest light, whose orb may be eclipsed,
But not thy praise, divinest Cynthia!"

"The fulsome compliments," says Mr. Gifford, "paid to 'the obdurate virgin' of threescore and ten, the hoary-headed Cynthia of Whitehall, must have appeared infinitely ridiculous, if the frequency of the practice had not utterly taken away the sense of derision." We do not, however, see that this "frequency" at all diminished the feeling.

Shakespear did not perform any part in this or the preceding drama. It was followed by an epilogue, in which the author absolutely insulted the audience : —

"To crave your favour with a begging knee
Were to distrust the writer's faculty.
To promise better at the next we bring,
Prorogues disgrace, commends not any thing.
Stiffly to stand on this, and proudly approve
The play, might tax the maker of self-love.
I'll only speak what I have heard him say,
'By —— 't is good; and if you like 't, you may.'"

Here, certainly, is no lack of confidence, or, if the reader please, of bullying. It was, as his last biographer remarks, "a rude and desperate mode" of over-awing censure, when he suspected that he had not convinced the judgment of his hearers. This is very characteristic of Jonson.

The preceding "comical satire" was performed in 1600: its immediate successor was *The Poetaster,* which was first acted in the following year. This had a personal application. Marston and Decker are introduced under the names of Crispinus and Demetrius. Jonson had, indeed, a happy knack of making enemies. He provoked at the same time, the lawyers and the soldiers, by the freedom of his reflections on their respective professions. Complaint being made to the master of the revels, he would, if we understand his dedication rightly, have sustained no little inconvenience, had not a friend interceded for him with the lord chief justice, and prevented a prosecution. There is, however, nothing in the play to merit prosecution; there is nothing, indeed, that can be called bitter on either profession; and if the truth, thus moderately expressed, could give offence, we cannot very highly estimate the liberty of the age. In fact, every record proves that it was a vile, a slavish age. The players, too, were offended; and with more reason, for some of his censures are heavy enough. They were, no doubt, true; but surely Jonson, whatever his last biographer may affirm, must have had an unhappy temperament, thus frequently to quarrel with all the world. It has even been contended that Shakespear was ridiculed in this drama. We see no ground for the assertion. He speaks, indeed, of his persecuting players "on the other side the Tiber;" but there were other houses—the Swan, the Hope, the Fortune—besides the Globe. Yet there must have been some misunderstanding, or at least some degree of soreness, between the two dramatists at this very time. Thus, in *The Return from Par-*

nassus, two players of the Blackfriars, Kempe and Burbage, are introduced, and the former says* —

"Few of the university pens play well: they smell too much of that writer, Ovid, and that writer's *Metamorphosis* (!) and talk too much of Proserpine and Jupiter. Why, here's one fellow, Shakespear, puts them all down: ay, and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow: he brought up Horace giving the poets a pill †; but our fellow, Shakespear, hath given him a purge that made him bewry his credit."

Now, with all respect for the judgment of Mr. Gifford, there was either some hostility at this period between these two great men, or there is no meaning in language. As *one* of the players, whether individually alluded to or not, Shakespear might well feel some anger at such wholesale assaults as the following: —

"Are there no players here? no poet apes,
That come with basilisk's eyes, whose forked tongues
Are steep'd in venom, as their hearts in gall?
Each of them would help me ‡, they could wrest,
Pervert, and poison all they hear or see,
With senseless glosses and allusions."

Jonson found, as he himself allowed in the Apology which he wrote for this very play, *a hornet's nest*. Having endeavoured to palliate what he had said against the lawyers and soldiers, he adverts to the performers: —

"Now for the players: — it is true I tax'd them:
And yet but some; and those so sparingly,
As all the rest might have sit still unquestion'd,
Had they but had the wit or conscience
To think well of themselves. But, impotent, they
Thought each man's vice belong'd to their whole tribe,
And much good do't them! What they have done 'gainst me
I am not moved with: if it gave them meat,
Or got them clothes, 't is well; — that was their end.

* Anonymous. It appeared in 1602. Kempe and Burbage were co-partners with Shakespear in the Blackfriars.

† *Hor*. Ay,
Please it great Cesar, I have pills about me,
Mixt with the whitest kind of hellebore,
Would give him a light vomit," &c.
See the whole scene in *Poetaster*, vol. ii. p. 524. (edit. Gif.)

‡ It is Envy that speaks.

Only amongst them I am sorry for
Some better natures, by the rest so drawn,
To run in the vile line."

By the term *better natures*, we may certainly understand Shakespear. The dialogue in *The Return from Parnassus* shows that he had in some manner resented the imputation on poets and players. But there is no allusion to him any more than to the rest of his brethren, except in the verses just quoted; and they could not possibly be offensive to that celebrated man.

Though we freely absolve Jonson from the charge of malignity; though we are convinced he was led, by a hasty temperament, into a severity which his cooler judgment condemned; it is evident that he was by no means an agreeable man. He was never without enemies. It may, indeed, be contended, that they applied to themselves allusions which were never intended for them. This may be granted; yet it only proves that he had obtained for himself an unenviable reputation. "The nest of hornets," which he had so injudiciously, so wantonly, raised, left him no peace. Of these, Decker was the most exasperated. In 1602, he produced *The Satiromastix*, in ridicule both of *The Poetaster* and the author. That he signally failed, is well known. His piece being modelled, character for character, scene for scene, on its predecessor, could not fail to suffer by the comparison which it invited. He wrote, too, in downright anger, and thereby afforded another advantage to his competitor. But though Jonson had the superiority, he grew sick of the opposition; and in the Apology for this bitter play, he gave notice that he would next attempt tragedy:—

"And, since the comic muse
Hath proved so ominous to me, I will try
If tragedy have a more kind aspect:
Her favours in my next I will pursue."

He did so, and *Sejanus* appeared. He was, however, assisted by another pen, — probably Fletcher's; but, as it was a failure, he omitted all that was not his own, recast the piece, and produced it a second time

(1603). It was now successful. It was represented at the Globe, and Shakespear performed in it. This fact deserves notice. It shows that the two poets were not on the worst terms; that their soreness, whatever the cause, had to a considerable extent disappeared. We may say that this was the last occasion on which Shakespear can be *proved* to have acted. He might, perhaps he did, appear in subsequent pieces; but we have no record of the performance.

Of this drama, it is impossible to speak otherwise than in praise. It has merit of a very high order. The characters are true to history, and they are drawn with a vigour which none but the author could exhibit. In the strong masculine delineation of character, even Shakespear was much inferior to him. The truth, too, of the delineation was wonderful; and the manners of the times are described with a graphic power that evinces his profound acquaintance with antiquity. All the *dramatis personæ*, says a late critic, from the high-spirited and untractable Agrippina to the most supple follower of the favourite, are marked with truth and vigour; but it is in the characters of Tiberius and Sejanus that the poet has put forth all his strength. The profound art and deep dissimulation of the former, as contrasted with the versatile and shallow cunning of the latter, are portrayed with a most skilful and discriminating hand.

We have spoken of Jonson's acquaintance with antiquity. Here is a proof: Sejanus, though an infidel, is, for the sake of popularity, consulting the gods: —

"*A Sacellum (or Chapel) in* Sejanus's *House.*

"*Enter* Præcones *, Flamen †, *Tubicines*, *Tibicines*, Ministri, SEJANUS, TERENTIUS, SATRIUS, NATTA, &c.

"*Præ.* ‡ Be all profane far hence; fly, fly far off:
Be absent far; far hence be all profane!

* Præcones, Flamen, hi omnibus sacrificiis interesse solebant. — *Ros. Ant. Rom.* lib. iii. *Stuch. de Sac.* p. 72.

† Ex iis, qui Flamines Curiales dicerentur, vid. Lil. Greg. Gyr. Synt. 17. et Onup. Panvin. Rep Rom. Comment. 2.

‡ Moris antiqui erat, Præcones præcedere, et sacris arcere profanos. —*Cons. Briss. Ross. Stuch. Lil Gyr &c.*

[*Tub. and Tib.* [1] *sound while the Flamen washeth.*

"*Fla.* We have been faulty, but repent us now,
And bring pure [2] hands, pure vestments, and pure minds.

"1 *Min.* Pure vessels.

"2 *Min.* And pure offerings.

"3 *Min.* Garlands pure.

"*Fla.* Bestow your [3] garlands; and, with reverence, place
The vervin on the altar.

"*Præ.* [4] Favour your tongues.

[*While they sound again,* [5] *the Flamen takes of the honey with his finger, and tastes, then ministers to all the rest: so of the* [6] *milk in an earthen vessel, he deals about; which done, he sprinkleth upon the altar, milk; then imposeth the honey, and kindleth his gums, and after censing about the altar, placeth his censer thereon, into which they put several* [7] *branches of poppy, and the music ceasing, proceeds.*

"*Fla.* Great [8] mother Fortune, queen of human state,
Rectress of action, arbitress of fate,
To whom all sway, all power, all empire bows,
Be present, and propitious to our vows!

"*Præ.* Favour [9] it with your tongues.

"*Min.* Be present and propitious to our vows!

"*Omnes.* Accept our [10] offering, and be pleased, great goddess.

[1] Observatum antiquis invenimus, ut qui rem divinam facturus erat, lautus, ac mundus accederet, et ad suas levandas culpas, se imprimis, reum dicere solitum, et noxæ pœnituisse —*Lil Gyr Synt.* 17.

[2] In sacris puras manus, pura vestes, pura vasa, &c antiqui desiderabunt; ut ex Virg. Plaut. Tibul Ovid. &c pluribus locis constat.

[3] Alius ritus sertis aras coronare, et verbenas imponere.

[4] Hujusmodi verbis silentium imperatum fuisse constat. Vid. Sen. in lib. de beata vita. Serv. et Don. ad eum versum, lib v Æneid.

Ore favete omnes, et cingite tempora ramis.

[5] Vocabatur hic ritus Libatio. *Lege Rosin. Ant.* lib. iii. *Bar. Brisson. de form.* lib. i. *Stuchium de Sacrif. de Lil. Synt.* 17.

[6] In sacris Fortunæ lacte non vino libabant. iisdem test. Talia sacrificia ἀοινα et νηφάλια dicta. Hoc est sobria, et vino carentia.

[7] Hoc reddere erat et litare, id est propitiare, et votum impetrare; secundum Nonium Marcellum. Litare enim Mac. lib. iii. c. 5. explicat, sacrificio facto placare numen. In quo sens. leg. apud Plaut. Senec. Suet. &c.

[8] His solemnibus præfationibus in sacris utebantur.

[9] Quibus, in clausu, populus vel cœtus a præconibus favere jubebatur; id est, bona verba fari. Talis enim altera hujus formæ interpretatio apud Briss. lib. i. extat. Ovid. lib i. Fast. Linguis animisque favete. Et Metam. lib. xv.

· piumque
Æneadæ præstant et mente, et voce favorem.

[10] Solennis formula in donis cuivis nomini offerendis.

" *Ter.* See, see, the image stirs !
" *Sat.* And turns away !
" *Nat.* Fortune [1] averts her face !
" *Fla.* Avert, you gods,
The prodigy. Still ! still ! some pious rite
We have neglected. Yet, heaven be appeased,
And be all tokens false and void, that speak
Thy present wrath !
" *Sej.* Be thou dumb, scrupulous priest :
And gather up thyself, with these thy wares,
Which I, in spight of thy blind mistress, or
Thy juggling mystery, religion, throw
Thus scorned on the earth. [*Overturns the statue and the altar.*]
Nay, hold thy look
Averted till I woo thee turn again ;
And thou shalt stand to all posterity,
The eternal game and laughter, with thy neck
Writh'd to thy tail, like a ridiculous cat.
Avoid these fumes, these superstitious lights,
And all these cosening ceremonies ; you,
Your pure and spiced conscience !"

Sejanus, however, dreads, as he well may, the superstition of the people, and he is anxious to take measures for his defence : —

" These things begin
To look like dangers, now, worthy my fates.
Fortune, I see thy worst : let doubtful states,
And things uncertain hang upon thy will ;
Me surest death shall render certain still.
Yet, why is now my thought turn'd toward death,
Whom fates have let go on, so far in breath,
Uncheck'd or unreproved ? I, that did help
To fell the lofty cedar of the world
Germanicus ; that at one stroke cut down
Drusus, that upright elm ; wither'd his vine ;
Laid Silius and Sabinus, two strong oaks,
Flat on the earth ; besides those other shrubs,
Cordus and Sosia, Claudia Pulchra,
Furnius and Gallus, which I have grubb'd up ;
And since, have set my axe so strong and deep
Into the root of spreading Agrippine ;
Lopt off and scatter'd her proud branches, Nero,

1 Leg. Dio. Rom. Hist., lib. lviii. p. 717. de hoc sacrificio.

Drusus; and Caius too, although re-planted.
If you will, Destinies, that after all,
I faint now ere I touch my period,
You are but cruel; and I already have done
Things great enough. All Rome hath been my slave;
The senate sate an idle looker on,
And witness of my power; when I have blush'd
More to command than it to suffer · all
The fathers have sate ready and prepared,
To give me empire, temples, or their throats,
When I would ask 'em; and, what crowns the top,
Rome, senate, people, all the world have seen
Jove, but my equal; Cæsar, but my second.
'T is then your malice, Fates, who, but your own,
Envy and fear to have any power long known."

Yet, with many beauties, this drama has many defects. The plot is amazingly complicated: no penetration can anticipate the *dénouement;* and even then the steps by which it is effected are invisible. Then the parade of learning exhibited in it must have rendered it unfit for popular representation.

It is difficult to learn where and how Jonson acquired the erudition for which he was so much praised even by Selden. He was not long at Westminster school; his college experience was short; he was for some time in the army; and he was no enemy to conviviality. Sir Walter Raleigh had established a club at the Mermaid, a well-known tavern in Friday-street. The members were Shakespear, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Cotton, Carew, Martin, Donne, our author, and some others. Here Jonson was as regular in his attendance as any of them: here, too, were most of his "wit-combats" with Shakespear,—combats which set the table in a roar. Thus Beaumont in a letter to him:—

"What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whom they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life."

Where, we repeat, amidst scenes so unfavourable to study, Jonson acquired an erudition so extensive, we cannot tell. He must have been a hard student; and have given himself up to amusement far less than is generally supposed.

On the accession of James I., the circumstances of Jonson wore a more smiling aspect. Elizabeth was penurious, and when she did give, was more fond of rewarding flattery than merit. James, pleased with the Entertainment which was first composed for his reception, took him into favour. Several of his pageant compositions (in which he was generally assisted by others) appeared at this time. Splendid in show, and ingenious in design, they might be; but they are beneath criticism. — This royal favour threatened at one time to be of short duration. Marston, with whom he had become reconciled, had, in conjunction with Chapman, written a comedy called *Eastward Hoe!* one passage of which reflected on the Scotch: —

" *Scapethrift.* And is it (Virginia) a pleasant country withal?

" *Seagul.* As ever the sun shined on: temperate, and full of all sorts of excellent viands: wild boar is as common there as our tamest bacon is here; venison as mutton. And then you shall live freely there, — without serjeants, or courtiers, or lawyers, or intelligencers, only a few industrious Scots, perhaps, who, indeed, are dispersed over the face of the whole earth. But as for them, there are no greater friends to Englishmen and England — when they are out of it — in the world than they are; and, for my part, I would an hundred thousand of them were there (Virginia) — for we are all one country men now, ye know, and we should find ten times more comfort of them *there* than we do here."

It was supposed — probably with justice — that Jonson had also some little share in the composition of this piece, though none in the offensive passage. One thing, at least, is certain, — that he was privy to the composition. The Scotch were incensed at the passage; and it was shown to James, who ordered the arrest of the authors. This fact may surprise readers who judge

of our past liberty by that which we now enjoy. Here was liberty indeed, when an innocent *jeu d esprit* could subject the authors to imprisonment and probably to mutilation,—for there was a rumour that their ears and noses were to be slit. No sooner did Jonson hear of the arrest of his two friends, than, though he was unmolested, he voluntarily accompanied them to prison. This was certainly heroic: yet it has procured him no favour with most of our biographers. By one he is vaguely accused of writing a comedy "against the Scots." By another he is stigmatised as a fool for venturing "to ridicule the Scottish nation in the court of a Scottish king." By both, and by a score, besides he has received censure where he merited praise. After his declaration to Drummond of Hawthornden, that he had not written the passage, "Chapman and Marston having written it amongst them," surely he might be believed. Neither his imprisonment, nor that of his friends, was long; yet they were not enlarged "without much interest." Perhaps regard for him induced the king, or some one as powerful, to drop the prosecution. One circumstance connected with this affair must not be omitted. When the menace of mutilation reached Jonson's mother, she prepared a poison which she intended to put into his drink, and thereby prevent the shame of the exhibition. To him she said nothing of her purpose; but on his enlargement she produced it, and "to show that she was no churl," adds her son, "she designed to have first drunk of it herself." This woman had a Roman spirit; and she had evidently transmitted a portion of it to him: still it is a spirit which we may rather admire than praise.

Jonson is censured for "the slowness" with which he composed his dramas. He certainly did not produce many during a long series of years: but those who thus speak of him do not enter into all his circumstances. In the first place, his dramas are so highly finished, so elaborate, so learned, that they could not be rapidly composed. In the next, he had other pursuits,

which must have engrossed the greater portion of his time. Before he was three and twenty, he had read most of the Greek and Roman classics. Before he was thirty, he had written the dramas we have mentioned, besides great part of *The Fox;* he had drawn up several masques and entertainments; he had translated Horace, and probably the Poetics of Aristotle; he had collected a vast body of notes to illustrate both; he had collected much relative to theology, history, geography; he had probably drawn up his Grammar; he had made some progress in one at least of the Oriental languages; and he had read immensely. There was more than poetic truth in the praise of lord Falkland: —

> " His learning such, no author, old or new,
> Escaped his reading that deserved his view;
> And such his judgment, so exact his taste,
> Of what was best in books, or what books best,
> That had he joined these notes his labour took
> From each most praised and praise-deserving book,
> And, could the world of that choice treasure boast,
> It need not care though all the rest were lost."

Safely may we pronounce Jonson to have been a man of extraordinary application, no less than of execution. He did not, indeed, insult the world by hasty, crude, indigested performances; and for this he must have praise from all but the most censorous of his critics.

Volpone, or *The Fox*, was represented at the Globe in 1605. As this and *The Alchemist* are held to be the greatest of Jonson's productions, we shall devote a few pages to its analysis. — The scene is Venice. *Volpone* is a noble of that proud city; avaricious, yet fond of pleasure; selfish, voluptuous, crafty, irreligious, malignant. He has a *parasite, Mosca,* who flatters him in every thing, and who is become necessary to him. The opening scene will sufficiently acquaint us with the characters of both: —

" *A Room in* Volpone's *House.*

" *Enter* VOLPONE *and* MOSCA.

" *Volp.* Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!—
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.
[*Mosca withdraws the curtain, and discovers piles of gold, plate, jewels, &c.*
Hail the world's soul and mine! more glad than is
The teeming earth to see the long'd-for sun
Peep through the horns of the celestial Ram,
Am I, to view thy splendor darkening his;
That lying here, amongst my other hoards,
Shew'st like a flame by night, or like the day
Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled
Unto the centre. O thou son of Sol,
But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
With adoration, thee, and every relick
Of sacred treasure in this blessed room.
Well did wise poets, by thy glorious name,
Title that age which they would have the best;
Thou being the best of things, and far transcending
All style of joy, in children, parents, friends,
Or any other waking dream on earth:
Thy looks when they to Venus did ascribe,
They should have given her twenty thousand Cupids;
Such are thy beauties and our loves! Dear saint,
Riches, the dumb god, that giv'st all men tongues,
That canst do nought, and yet mak'st men do all things;
The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtue, fame,
Honour and all things else. Who can get thee,
He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise——
" *Mos.* And what he will, sir. Riches are in fortune
A greater good than wisdom is in nature.
" *Volp.* True, my beloved Mosca. Yet I glory
More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
Than in the glad possession, since I gain
No common way; I use no trade, no venture;
I wound no earth with plough-shares, fat no beasts,
To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,
Oil, corn, or men, to grind them into powder:
I blow no subtle glass, expose no ships
To threat'nings of the furrow-faced sea;
I turn no monies in the public bank,
Nor usure private.
" *Mos.* No, sir, nor devour,

Soft prodigals. You shall have some will swallow
A melting heir as glibly as your Dutch
Will pills of butter, and ne'er purge for it;
Tear forth the fathers of poor families
Out of their beds, and coffin them alive
In some kind clasping prison, where their bones
May be forth-coming, when the flesh is rotten:
But your sweet nature doth abhor these courses;
You lothe the widow's or the orphan's tears
Should wash your pavements, or their piteous cries
Ring in your roofs, and beat the air for vengeance.
"*Volp.* Right, Mosca; I do lothe it.
"*Mos.* And besides, sir,
You are not like the thresher that doth stand
With a huge flail, watching a heap of corn,
And, hungry, dares not taste the smallest grain,
But feeds on mallows, and such bitter herbs;
Nor like the merchant, who hath fill'd his vaults
With Romagnia, and rich Candian wines,
Yet drinks the lees of Lombard's vinegar:
You will lie not in straw, whilst moths and worms
Feed on your sumptuous hangings and soft beds;
You know the use of riches, and dare give now
From that bright heap, to me, your poor observer.
Or to your dwarf, or your hermaphrodite,
Your eunuch, or what other household trifle
Your pleasure allows maintenance——
"*Volp.* Hold thee, Mosca, [*Gives him money.*
Take of my hand; thou strik'st on truth in all,
And they are envious term thee parasite."

There is something true to nature in the preceding scene. If *Volpone* is avaricious, fond of pleasure, eager to accumulate money, and an idolater of it when accumulated, still he does not love the tears of the widow or the orphan; he does not grind poor wretches to the earth; he does not endanger any human being for his sake;—no, no! he has an easier way of increasing his stores:—

"I have no wife, no parent. child, ally,
To give my substance to; but whom I make
Must be my heir; and this makes men observe me:
This draws new clients daily to my house,
Women and men of every sex and age,
That bring me presents, send me plate, coin, jewels,

With hope that when I die (which they expect
Each greedy minute) it shall then return
Ten-fold upon them; whilst some, covetous
Above the rest, seek to engross me whole,
And counter-work the one unto the other,
Contend in gifts, as they would seem in love:
All which I suffer, playing with their hopes,
And am content to coin them into profit,
And look upon their kindness, and take more,
And look on that; still bearing them in hand,
Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
And draw it by their mouths, and back again.—"

The number of valuable presents which he daily receives from crafty old men, who believe his death at hand, and who hope to recover their own with interest — his pretended sickness — the care of his parasite to persuade every one of the present-bringing rogues that *he* is to be the chief heir, — are admirably and humorously described. The first who comes is *Voltore*, the advocate, with a massive piece of plate. He cannot, however, be admitted until *Volpone* is prepared, — until he has put on his sick dress, to make him believe that he is near his end: —

"*Volp.* Give me my furs. [*Puts on his sick dress.*] Why dost thou laugh so, man?
"*Mos.* I cannot choose, sir, when I apprehend
What thoughts he has without now, as he walks:
That this might be the last gift he should give;
That this would fetch you; if you died to-day,
And gave him all, what he should be to-morrow;
What large return would come of all his ventures;
How he should worship'd be, and reverenced;
Ride with his furs, and foot-cloths; waited on
By herds of fools, and clients; have clear way
Made for his mule, as letter'd as himself:
Be call'd the great and learned advocate:
And then concludes, there's nought impossible.
"*Volp.* Yes, to be learned, Mosca.
"*Mos.* O, no: rich
Implies it. Hood an ass with reverend purple,
So you can hide his two ambitious ears,
And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor.
"*Volp.* My caps, my caps, good Mosca. Fetch him in.

" *Mos.* Stay, sir; your ointment for your eyes.
" *Volp.* That 's true;
Dispatch, dispatch: I long to have possession
Of my new present.
" *Mos.* That, and thousands more,
I hope to see you lord of.
" *Volp.* Thanks, kind Mosca.
" *Mos.* And that, when I am lost in blended dust,
And hundred such as I am, in succession ——
" *Volp.* Nay, that were too much, Mosca.
" *Mos.* You shall live,
Still, to delude these harpies.
" *Volp.* Loving Mosca!
'T is well: my pillow now, and let him enter,
[*Exit* Mosc.
Now, my feign'd cough, my phtisic, and my gout,
My apoplexy, palsy, and catarrhs,
Help, with your forced functions, this my posture,
Wherein, this three year, I have milk'd their hopes.
He comes; I hear him — Uh! [*coughing.*] uh! uh!
uh! O —

Re-enter Mosca, *introducing* Voltore *with a piece of Plate.*

" *Mos.* You still are what you were, sir. Only you,
Of all the rest, are he commands his love,
And you do wisely to preserve it thus,
With early visitation, and kind notes
Of your good meaning to him, which, I know,
Cannot but come most grateful. Patron! sir!
Here's signior Voltore is come —
" *Volp.* [*faintly.*] What say you?
" *Mos.* Sir, signior Voltore is come this morning
To visit you.
" *Volp.* I thank him.
" *Mos.* And hath brought
A piece of antique plate, bought of St Mark,
With which he here presents you.
" *Volp.* He is welcome.
Pray him to come more often.
" *Mos.* Yes.
" *Volt.* What says he?
" *Mos.* He thanks you, and desires you see him often.
" *Volp.* Mosca.
" *Mos.* My patron!
" *Volp.* Bring him near, where is he?
I long to feel his hand.

" *Mos.* The plate is here, sir.
" *Volt.* How fare you, sir?
" *Volp.* I thank you, signior Voltore;
Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad.
" *Volt.* [*putting it into his hands.*] I 'm sorry,
To see you still thus weak.
" *Mos.* That he 's not weaker. [*Aside.*
" *Volp.* You are too munificent.
" *Volt.* No, sir; would to heaven,
I could as well give health to you, as that plate!
" *Volp.* You give, sir, what you can; I thank you. Your love
Hath taste in this, and shall not be unanswer'd:
I pray you see me often.
" *Volt.* Yes, I shall, sir.
" *Volp.* Be not far from me.
" *Mos.* Do you observe that, sir?
" *Volp.* Hearken unto me still; it will concern you.
" *Mos.* You are a happy man, sir; know your good.
" *Volp.* I cannot now last long ——
" *Mos.* You are his heir, sir.
" *Volt.* Am I?
" *Volp.* I feel me going; Uh! uh! uh! uh!
I 'm sailing to my port, Uh, uh, uh, uh!
And I am glad I am so near my haven.
" *Mos.* Alas, kind gentleman! Well, we must all go ——
" *Volt.* But, Mosca ——
" *Mos.* Age will conquer.
" *Volt.* 'Pray thee, hear me:
Am I inscribed his heir for certain?
" *Mos.* Are you!
I do beseech you, sir, you will vouchsafe
To write me in your family. All my hopes
Depend upon your worship: I am lost,
Except the rising sun do shine on me.
" *Volt.* It shall both shine, aud warm thee, Mosca.
" *Mos.* Sir,
I am a man, that hath not done your love
All the worst offices: here I wear your keys
See all your coffers and your caskets lock'd,
Keep the poor inventory of your jewels,
Your plate and monies; am your steward, sir,
Husband your goods here.
" *Volt.* But am I sole heir?
" *Mos.* Without a partner, sir; confirm'd this morning:
The wax is warm yet, and the ink scarce dry

Upon the parchment.
 " *Volt.* Happy, happy, me!
By what good chance, sweet Mosca?
 " *Mos.* Your desert, sir;
I know no second cause.
 " *Volt.* Thy modesty
Is not to know it; well, we shall requite it.
 " *Mos.* He ever liked your course, sir; that first took him.
I oft have heard him say, how he admired
Men of your large profession, that could speak
To every cause, and things mere contraries,
Till they were hoarse again, yet all be law;
That, with most quick agility, could turn,
And [re-] return: [could] make knots, and undo them;
Give forked counsel; take provoking gold
On either hand, and put it up . these men,
He knew, would thrive with their humility.
And, for his part, he thought he should be blest
To have his heir of such a suffering spirit,
So wise, so grave, of so perplex'd a tongue,
And loud withal, that would not wag, nor scarce
Lie still, without a fee; when every word
Your worship but lets fall, is a chequin!—"

This advocate, who, crafty as he is, is easily gulled, has scarcely time to part when another knocks at the door. This is *Corbaccio,* more crafty, yet more gullible, than his predecessor. Before this new comer is admitted *Volpone* wishes to embrace *Mosca* for the cleverness with which the last scene has been managed; but his parasite is less imprudent:—

 " *Volp.* [*springing up.*] Excellent Mosca!
Come hither, let me kiss thee.
 " *Mos.* Keep you still, sir.
Here is Corbaccio.
 " *Volp.* Set the plate away:
The vulture's gone, and the old raven's come!
 " *Mos.* Betake you to your silence, and your sleep.
Stand there and multiply.
 [*Putting the plate to the rest.*]
 Now, shall we see
A wretch who is indeed more impotent
Than this can feign to be; yet hopes to hop
Over his grave—

Enter CORBACCIO.

Signior Corbaccio!.
You're very welcome, sir.
" *Corb.* How does your patron?
" *Mos.* Troth, as he did, sir: no amends.
" *Corb.* What! mends he?
" *Mos.* No, sir: he's rather worse.
" *Corb.* That's well. Where is he?
" *Mos.* Upon his couch, sir, newly fall'n asleep.
" *Corb.* Does he sleep well?
" *Mos.* No wink, sir, all this night,
Nor yesterday; but slumbers.
" *Corb.* Good! he should take
Some counsel of physicians: I have brought him
An opiate here, from mine own doctor.
" *Mos.* He will not hear of drugs.
" *Corb.* Why? I myself
Stood by while it was made, saw [illegible] ingredients;
And [illegible], it cannot but most gently work:
My life for his, 't is but to make him sleep.
" *Volp.* Ay, his last sleep if he would take it. [*Aside.*
" *Mos.* Sir,
He has no faith in physic.
" *Corb.* Say you, say you?
" *Mos.* He has no faith in physic: he does think
Most of your doctors are th[illegible] dange[illegible]
And worse disease, to escape. [illegible] have
Heard him protest, that your physician
Should never be his heir.
" *Corb.* Not I his heir?
" *Mos.* Not your physician, sir.
" *Corb.* O, no, no, no,
I do not mean it.
" *Mos.* No, sir, nor their fees
He cannot brook: he says, they flay a man,
Before they kill him.
" *Corb.* Right, I do conceive you.
" *Mos.* And then they do it by experiment;
For which the law not only doth absolve them,
But gives them great reward: and he is loth
To hire his death, so.
" *Corb.* It is true, they kill
With as much license as a judge.
" *Mos.* Nay, more;
For he but kills, sir, where the law condemns,
And these can kill him too.

" *Corb.* Ay, or me;
Or any man. How does his apoplex?
Is that strong on him still?
" *Mos.* Most violent.
His speech is broken, and his eyes are set,
His face drawn longer than 't was wont ——
" *Corb.* How! how!
Stronger than he was wont?
" *Mos.* No, sir. his face
Drawn longer than 't was wont.
" *Corb.* O, good!
" *Mos.* His mouth
Is ever gaping, and his eyelids hang.
" *Corb.* Good.
" *Mos.* A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints,
And makes the colour of his flesh like lead.
" *Corb.* 'T is good.
" *Mos.* His pulse beats slow, and dull.
" *Corb.* Good symptoms still.
" *Mos.* And from his brain ——
" *Corb.* I conceive you; good.
" *Mos.* Flows a cold sweat, with a continual rheum,
Forth the resolved corners of his eyes.
" *Corb.* Is 't possible? Yet I am better, ha!
How does he, with the swimming of his head?
" *Mos.* O, sir, 't is past the scotomy: he now
Hath lost his feeling, and hath left to snort:
You hardly can perceive him, that he breathes.
" *Corb.* Excellent, excellent! sure I shall out-last him:
This makes me young again, a score of years.
" *Mos.* I was a coming for you, sir.
" *Corb.* Has he made his will?
What has he given me?
" *Mos.* No, sir.
" *Corb.* Nothing! ha?
" *Mos.* He has not made his will, sir.
" *Corb.* Oh, oh, oh!
What then did Voltore, the lawyer, here?
" *Mos.* He smelt a carcase, sir, when he but heard
My master was about his testament;
As I did urge him to it for your good ——
" *Corb.* He came unto him, did he? I thought so.
" *Mos.* Yes, and presented him this piece of plate.
" *Corb.* To be his heir?
" *Mos.* I do not know, sir.

" *Corb.* True:
I know it too.
" *Mos.* By your own scale, sir. [*Aside.*
" *Corb.* Well,
I shall prevent him, yet. See, Mosca, look,
Here, I have brought a bag of bright chequines,
Will quite weigh down his plate.
" *Mos.* [*taking the bag.*] Yea, marry, sir.
This is true physic, this your sacred medicine;
No talk of opiates, to this great elixir!
" *Corb.* 'T is aurum palpabile, if not potabile.
" *Mos.* It shall be minister'd to him, in his bowl.
" *Corb.* Ay, do, do, do.
" *Mos.* Most blessed cordial!
This will recover him.
" *Corb.* Yes, do, do, do.
" *Mos.* I think it were not best, sir.
" *Corb.* What?
" *Mos.* To recover him.
" *Corb.* O, no, no, no; by no means.
" *Mos.* Why, sir, this
Will work some strange effect, if he but feel it.
" *Corb.* 'T is true, therefore forbear; I'll take my venture:
Give me it again.
" *Mos.* At no hand; pardon me:
You shall not do yourself that wrong, sir. I
Will so advise you, you shall have it all.
" *Corb.* How?
" *Mos.* All, sir; 't is your right, your own; no man
Can claim a part: 't is yours without a rival,
Decreed by destiny.
" *Corb.* How, how, good Mosca?
" *Mos.* I'll tell you, sir. This fit he shall recover.
" *Corb.* I do conceive you.
" *Mos.* And, on first advantage
Of his gain'd sense, will I re-importune him
Unto the making of his testament,
And shew him this. [*Pointing to the money.*
" *Corb.* Good, good.
" *Mos.* 'T is better yet,
If you will hear, sir.
" *Corb.* Yes, with all my heart.
" *Mos.* Now would I counsel you, make home with speed;
There, frame a will; whereto you shall inscribe
My master your sole heir.

" *Corb.* And disinherit
My son!
" *Mos.* O, sir, the better: for that colour
Shall make it much more taking.
" *Corb.* O, but colour?
" *Mos.* This Will, sir, you shall send it unto me.
Now, when I come to inforce, as I will do,
Your cares, your watchings, and your many prayers,
Your more than many gifts, your this day's present,
And last, produce your will; where without thought,
Or least regard, unto your proper issue,
A son so brave, and highly meriting,
The stream of your diverted love hath thrown you
Upon my master, and made him your heir:
He cannot be so stupid, or stone-dead,
But out of conscience, and mere gratitude ——
" *Corb.* He must pronounce me his?
" *Mos.* 'T is true.
" *Corb.* This plot
Did I think on before.
" *Mos.* I do believe it.
" *Corb.* Do you not believe it?
" *Mos.* Yes, sir.
" *Corb.* Mine own project.
" *Mos.* Which, when he hath done, sir ——
" *Corb.* Publish'd me his heir?
" *Mos.* And you so certain to survive him ——
" *Corb.* Ay.
" *Mos.* Being so lusty a man ——
" *Corb.* 'Tis true.
" *Mos.* Yes, sir ——
" *Corb.* I thought on that too. See, how he should be
The very organ to express my thoughts!
" *Mos.* You have not only done yourself a good ——
" *Corb.* But multiplied it on my son.
" *Mos.* 'T is right, sir.
" *Corb.* Still, my invention.
" *Mos.* 'Las, sir! heaven knows,
It hath been all my study, all my care,
(I e'en grow gray withal,) how to work things ——
" *Corb.* I do conceive, sweet Mosca.
" *Mos.* You are he,
For whom I labour here.
" *Corb.* Ay, do, do, do:
I 'll straight about it. *Going.*
" *Mos.* Rook go with you, raven!
" *Corb.* I know thee honest.

" *Mos.* You do lie, sir! [*Aside.*
" *Corb.* And———
" *Mos.* Your knowledge is no better than your ears, sir.
" *Corb.* I do not doubt to be a father to thee.
" *Mos.* Nor I to gull my brother of his blessing.
" *Corb.* I may have my youth restored to me, why not?
" *Mos.* Your worship is a precious ass!
" *Corb.* What say'st thou?
" *Mos.* I do desire your worship to make haste, sir.
" *Corb.* 'Tis done, 'tis done; I go. [*Exit.*
" *Volp.* [*leaping from his couch.*] O, I shall burst!
Let out my sides, let out my sides ——.
" *Mos.* Contain
Your flux of laughter, sir: you know this hope
Is such a bait, it covers any hook.
" *Volp.* O, but thy working, and thy placing it!
I cannot hold; good rascal, let me kiss thee:
I never knew thee in so rare a humour."

Scarcely have the two brothers time to congratulate themselves, before a third gull arrives. Volpone hastily lies down, his eyes are anointed, and at length the door is opened: —

" *Enter* CORVINO.

" Signior Corvino! come most wish'd for! O,
How happy were you, if you knew it, now!
" *Corv.* Why? what? wherein?
" *Mos.* The tardy hour is come, sir.
" *Corb.* He is not dead?
" *Mos.* Not dead, sir, but as good;
He knows no man.
" *Corv.* How shall I do then?
" *Mos.* Why, sir?
" *Corv.* I have brought him here a pearl.
" *Mos.* Perhaps he has
So much remembrance left as to know you, sir:
He still calls on you; nothing but your name
Is in his mouth. Is your pearl orient, sir?
" *Corv.* Venice was never owner of the like.
" *Volp.* [*faintly.*] Signior Corvino!
" *Mos.* Hark.
" *Volp.* Signior Corvino!
" *Mos.* He calls you; step and give it him.—He 's here, sir,
And he has brought you a rich pearl.

"*Corv.* How do you sir?
Tell him, it doubles the twelfth caract.
"*Mos.* Sir,
He cannot understand, his hearing 's gone;
And yet it comforts him to see you ——
"*Corv.* Say,
I have a diamond for him, too.
"*Mos.* Best shew it, sir;
Put it into his hand; 't is only there
He apprehends: he has his feeling, yet.
See how he grasps it!
"*Corv.* 'Las, good gentleman!
How pitiful the sight is!
"*Mos.* Tut! forget, sir.
The weeping of an heir should still be laughter
Under a visor.
"*Corv.* Why am I his heir?
"*Mos.* Sir, I am sworn, I may not show the will
Till he be dead; but here has been Corbaccio,
Here has been Voltore, here were others too,
I cannot number 'em, they were so many;
All gaping here for legacies: but I,
Taking the vantage of his naming you,
Signior Corvino, Signior Corvino, took
Paper, and pen, and ink, and there I ask'd him,
Whom he would have his heir? *Corvino.* Who
Should be executor? *Corvino.* And,
To any question he was silent to,
I still interpreted the nods he made,
Through weakness, for consent: and sent home th' others,
Nothing bequeath'd them, but to cry and curse.
"*Corv.* O, my dear Mosca! [*They embrace.*] Does he not perceive us?
"*Mos.* No more than a blind harper. He knows no man,
No face of friend, nor name of any servant,
Who 't was that fed him last, or gave him drink:
Not those he had begotten, or brought up,
Can he remember.
"*Corv.* Has he children?
"*Mos.* Bastards,
Some dozen, or more, that he begot on beggars,
Gypsies, and Jews, and black-moors, when he was drunk.
Knew you not that, sir? 'tis the common fable.
The dwarf, the fool, the eunuch, are all his;
He 's the true father of his family,
In all, save me:— but he has given them nothing.

" *Corv.* That's well, that's well! Art sure he does not hear us?
" *Mos.* Sure, sir! why, look you, credit your own sense.
[*Shouts in* VOL.'s *ear.*
The pox approach, and add to your diseases,
If it would send you hence, the sooner sir,
For your incontinence, it hath deserved it
Throughly and throughly, and the plague to boot!——
You may come near, sir.— Would you would once close
Those filthy eyes of yours, that flow with slime,
Like two frog-pits; and those same hanging cheeks,
Cover'd with hide instead of skin — Nay, help, sir——
That look like frozen dish-clouts set on end!
" *Corv.* [*aloud.*] Or like an old smoked wall, on which the rain
Ran down in streaks!
" *Mos.* Excellent, sir! speak out:
You may be louder yet; a culverin
Discharged in his ear would hardly bore it.
" *Corv.* His nose is like a common sewer, still running.
" *Mos.* 'Tis good! And what his mouth?
" *Corv.* A very draught.
" *Mos.* O, stop it up——
" *Corv.* By no means.
" *Mos.* 'Pray you, let me:
Faith I could stifle him rarely with a pillow,
As well as any woman that should keep him.
" *Corv.* Do as you will; but I'll begone.
" *Mos.* Be so;
It is your presence makes him last so long.
" *Corv.* I pray you, use no violence.
" *Mos.* No, sir! why?
Why should you be thus scrupulous, pray you, sir?
" *Corv.* Nay, at your discretion.
" *Mos.* Well, good sir, begone.
" *Corv.* I will not trouble him now to take my pearl.
" *Mos.* Puh! nor your diamond. What a needless care
Is this afflicts you? Is not all here yours?
Am not I here, whom you have made your creature?
That owe my being to you?
" *Corv.* Grateful Mosca!
Thou art my friend, my fellow, my companion,
My partner, and shalt share in all my fortunes.
" *Mos.* Excepting one.
" *Corv.* What's that?
" *Mos.* Your gallant wife, sir.— [*Exit* CORV.

Now is he gone: we had no other means
To shoot him hence, but this.
"*Volp.* My divine Mosca!
Thou hast to-day outgone thyself."

We will not follow the *Fox* in his attempts to seduce the wife of Corvino. There is humour in it without any coarseness, or at least without any filth. Nor have we room for the scene where he pretends to be dead, and the birds of prey, — the vulture, the raven, the crow, — flock to the spoil. The whole scene is drawn with irresistible humour. The termination has a moral: both the *Fox* and Parasite are fitly punished.

It would be useless to write in praise of this comedy: we venture to say that the English language does not boast of a better.

The pageants which Jonson continued to furnish, sometimes at the command of the court, sometimes at that of the civic bodies, we are not disposed to notice. Ingenious they might be, — ingenious they were; but no power can give interest to works designed for local and fleeting occasions. In one respect they were useful to him: they replenished a purse that was too often empty. He received from some of these bodies, and from some of the nobility, periodical sums, which he appears to have spent as easily as he procured them. We cannot, however, avoid expressing the regret which all must feel at the necessity of his condition; that he was compelled to trifle where he wished to be solemn, to write for empty gazers where he longed to instruct the wisest. From 1605 to 1609 was a loss to posterity, however advantageous in a pecuniary view this period might be to himself. In the latter year, however, appeared *The Silent Woman*, which is a noble production. It is, however, inferior to *The Alchemist*, which was acted in the following year, and which is termed by Mr. Gifford "a prodigy of intellect."

This inimitable drama opens with a dispute between *Subtle* the alchemist and *Face*, who has assumed the

disguise of a captain, but who is in reality a butler. The dialogue between this brace of rogues exposes their character, their designs, their manner of life, and prepares us for all that follows. It is the business of Face to bring gulls to the conjuror, the fortune-teller, the finder of the philosopher's store, Subtle; and the profit of their business to be divided, just as their instrument Dol Common was divided, between them. They tell each other roundly what they have been; and we know not where their quarrel might have ended, had not the woman interfered, and represented to them how necessary it was even for villains to live in peace. They feel the justice of her remark, shake hands, and agree to labour together for the common good. The first gull that arrives is *Dapper*, a lawyer's clerk: he wants a familiar spirit to attend him, and win for him when he gambles. This request is granted; a familiar is to be sent him; and as he means to be liberal in his gratitude, and gives a good earnest of it, he is promised higher favour: he is to have a potent, mighty spirit, to bring him treasure, or whatever he wishes. Nay, he is gravely assured that a fortunate star presided at his birth, that he was born with a cawl on his head, that he is related to the queen of fairy, who greets him through the conjuror. Subtle and Face, or, as they call themselves, the Doctor and the Captain, fleece this credulous dupe to some tune, by promising him an interview with that personage, his aunt, in the course of the day. He is scarcely departed, when a tobacconist arrives, who is opening a new shop, and who desires to know where the door and windows are to be, and how his shelves and boxes are to be arranged: he, too, is satisfied, except with the amount of the gratuity which Face constrains him to give. But the most pleasant of all the dupes is *Sir Epicure Mammon*: he will be contented with nothing less than the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life which is to make the old young again. In return for this inestimable advantage, he is liberal of his gold —

why grudge a few pounds in weight when he is soon to have mountains of the metal? Ten long months has Subtle, aided by Face, pretended to labour for this great secret, and this day it is to be found. Yes, this day Sir Epicure's house is to be filled with gold, and his power of restoring youth conferred. In the joy of his heart he hastens to the house with a friend, *Surly*, who will not believe in the wonderful art. Mammon, after striving in vain to convince Surly of his unbelief, cries out to Subtle, and is answered by Face, who pretends to be working with the astrologer.*

" *Face.* [*within.*] Sir, he 'll come to you by and by.
" *Mam.* That is his fire-drake,
His Lungs†, his Zephyrus, he that puffs his coals,
Till he firk nature up, in her own centre.
You are not faithful, sir.‡ This night, I 'll change
All that is metal, in my house, to gold:
And, early in the morning, will I send
To all the plumbers and the pewterers,
And buy their tin and lead up; and to Lothbury§
For all the copper.
" *Sur.* What, and turn that too?
" *Mam.* Yes, and I 'll purchase Devonshire, and Cornwall,
And make them perfect Indies!‖ You admire now?
" *Sur.* No, faith.
" *Mam.* But when you see th' effects of the Great Medicine,
Of which one part projected on a hundred
Of Mercury, or Venus, or the moon,
Shall turn it to as many of the sun;

* This and the following extracts are from the admirable edition of Ben Jonson by Gifford, vol. iv.

† Lungs was a term of art, for the under operators in chemistry, whose business principally was to take care of the fire. So Cowley, in his sketch of a philosophic college, in the number of its members reckons two *Lungs*, or chemical servants; and afterwards, assigning their salaries, "to each of the *Lungs* twelve pounds."—WHAL.

‡ Not easy of faith, not believing.

§ *Lothbury* (Stow says) "is inhabited chiefly by founders, that cast candlesticks, chafing dishes, spice mortars, and such like *copper* works." P. 287.

‖ Transmute all their tin into gold. What follows may be explained from Chaucer:—

" The bodies seven, lo! here hem anone,
Sol gold is, and *Luna* silver we threpe,
Mars yron, *Mercury* quicksilver we clepe,
Saturnus leade, and *Jupiter* is tinne,
And *Venus* copir."

Chaucer's Yeoman's Tale.

Nay, to a thousand, so ad infinitum:
You will believe me.
“ *Sur.* Yes, when I see ’t I will.
“ *Mam.* Ha! why?
Do you think I fable with you? I assure you,
He that has once the flower of the sun,
The perfect ruby which we call elixir,
Not only can do that, but, by its virtue,
Can confer honour, love, respect, long life;
Give safety, valour, yea, and victory,
To whom he will. In eight and twenty days,
I ’ll make an old man of fourscore a child.
“ *Sur.* No doubt; he ’s that already.
“ *Mam.* Nay, I mean,
Restore his years, renew him, like an eagle,
To the fifth age; make him get sons and daughters,
Young giants; as our philosophers have done,
The ancient patriarchs, afore the flood,
But taking, once a week, on a knife’s point,
The quantity of a grain of mustard of it;
Become stout Marses.
“ *Sur.* The decay’d vestals of Pict-hatch*, would thank you
That keep the fire alive there.
“ *Mam.* ’T is the secret
Of nature naturized† ’gainst all infections,
Cures all diseases coming of all causes;
A month’s grief in a day, a year’s in twelve;
And, of what age soever, in a month:
Past all the dozes of your drugging doctors.
I’ ll undertake, withal, to fright the plague
Out of the kingdom in three months.” ‡

Let it not be supposed that Ben Jonson is here ridiculing an imaginary thing. In his age alchemy had its professors among the most learned men of Europe: nay, men who passed for orthodox Christians were

* See Vol. I. p. 17.

† Our poet seems here to allude to the theological distinction of *natura naturans*, and *natura naturata*. The former appellation is given to the *Creator*, who hath imparted existence and *nature* to all beings; and by the latter term the *creatures* are distinguished, as having received their *nature* and properties from the power of another.—Whal.

‡ The defence which Dr. Anthony published of himself at Cambridge in 1610, is called *Medicinæ chymicæ et veri potabilis auri assertio, ex lucubrationibus Fra. Anthonii Londinensis in medicina doctoris.* It is divided into seven chapters: the last enumerates the several distempers which his *aurum potabile* cures; among which is the plague itself; as he asserts to have been demonstrated by experience, in the plague which depopulated London in 1602.—Whal.

adepts in it. So great had the evil become, that more than one act of parliament had been passed against the transmutation of metals. But this had little effect: it tended to serve the cause of the knavish pretender by imposing secrecy on his dupes. The operations were performed in obscure places; the art was the more esteemed from its having provoked the attention of the legislature: it evidently contained secrets, thought the public, too dangerous to be known except by the learned and virtuous few. The satire, therefore, of Jonson was serviceable, and we have reason to think, effectual. Well had it been for the interests of sincerity and truth had the lash always been laid on abuses equally pernicious.

Sir Epicure Mammon is one of the most forcible characters in this drama. Avaricious though he be, he is still a sensualist; he wants riches, not so much for their own sake, as that they may become the means of indulging the basest propensities. He is still more anxious for the infallible elixir which shall prolong human life to an indefinite period. How well he had been tutored, or rather gulled, by Subtle, and Face, will appear from the following dialogue:—

———" How now!
Do we succeed? Is our day come? and holds it?
" *Face.* The evening will set red upon you, sir;
You have colour for it, crimson: The red ferment
Has done his office; three hours hence prepare you
To see projection.
" *Mam.* Pertinax, my Surly,
Again I say to thee, aloud, Be rich.
This day, thou shalt have ingots; and, to-morrow,
Give lords th' affront. — Is it, my Zephyrus, right?
Blushes the bolt's head?
" *Face.* Like a wench with child, sir,
That were but now discover'd to her master.
" *Mam.* Excellent witty Lungs! my only care is
Where to get stuff enough now to project on;
This town will not half serve me
" *Face.* No, sir! buy
The covering off o' churches.
" *Mam.* That's true.

"*Face.* Yes. Let them stand bare, as do their auditory;
Or cap them, new, with shingles.
"*Mam.* No, good thatch:
Thatch will lie light upon the rafters, Lungs. —
Lungs, I will manumit thee from the furnace;
I will restore thee thy complexion, Puffe,
Lost in the embers; and repair this brain,
Hurt with the fumes o' the metals.
"*Face.* I have blown, sir,
Hard for your wordship; thrown by many a coal,
When 't was not beech; weigh'd those I put in, just,
To keep your heat still even; these blear'd eyes
Have waked to read your several colours, sir,
Of the pale citron, the green lion, the crow,
The peacock's tail, the plumed swan.
"*Mam.* And, lastly,
Thou hast descry'd the flower, the sanguis agni?
"*Face.* Yes, sir.
"*Mam.* Where 's master?
"*Face.* At his prayers, sir, he;
Good man, he 's doing his devotions
For the success.
"*Mam.* Lungs, I will set a period
To all thy labours; thou shalt be the master
Of my seraglio."

The pretended devotion of Subtle is an admirable satire on the professors of this knavish art. To propitiate the favour of the religious, to mollify the puritans, to win the reverence of all, they were careful to enjoin peculiar sanctity of life to all who penetrated into their mysteries: —

"*Mam.* Good morrow, father.
"Gentle son, good morrow,
And to your friend there. What is he is with you?
"*Mam.* An heretic, that I did bring along,
In hope, sir, to convert him.
"*Sub.* Son, I doubt
You are covetous, that thus you meet your time
In the just point: prevent your day at morning.
This argues something, worthy of a fear
Of importune and carnal appetite.
Take heed you do not cause the blessing leave you,
With your ungovern'd haste. I should be sorry

To see my labours, now even at perfection,
Got by long watching and large patience,
Not prosper where my love and zeal hath placed them.
Which (heaven I call to witness, with yourself,
To whom I have pour'd my thoughts), in all my ends,
Have look'd no way, but unto public good,
To pious uses, and dear charity.
Now grown a prodigy with men. Wherein
If you, my son, should now prevaricate,
And to your own particular lusts employ
So great and catholic a bliss, be sure
A curse will follow, yea, and overtake
Your subtle and most secret ways.
"*Mam.* I know, sir;
You shall not need to fear me · I but come,
To have you confute this gentleman.
"*Sur.* Who is,
Indeed, sir, somewhat costive of belief
Toward your stone; would not be gull'd.
"*Sub.* Well, son,
All that I can convince him in is this,
The WORK IS DONE, bright sol is in his robe.
We have a medicine of the triple soul,
The glorified spirit! Thanks be to heaven,
And make us worthy of it!"

After this precious display of piety, we have one still more precious concerning the virtues of "the wonderful art."

"*Sub.* Look well to the register.
And let your heat still lessen by degrees,
To the aludels.
"*Face.* [*within.*] Yes, sir.
"*Sub.* Did you look
O' the bolt's-head yet?
"*Face.* [*within.*] Which? on D, sir?
"*Sub.* Ay;
What 's the complexion?
"*Face.* [*within.*] Whitish.
"*Sub.* Infuse vinegar,
To draw his volatile substance and his tincture·
And let the water in glass E be filter'd,
And put into the gripe's egg. Lute him well;
And leave him closed in balneo.
"*Face.* [*within.*] I will, sir.
"*Sur.* What a brave language here is! next to canting.

"*Sub.* I have another work, you never saw, son,
That three days since past the philosopher's wheel,
In the lent heat of Athanor; and 's become
Snlphur of Nature.
"*Mam.* But 't is for me?
"*Sub.* What need you?
You have enough in that is perfect.
"*Mam.* O but——
"*Sub.* Why, this is covetise!
"*Mam.* No, I assure you,
I shall employ it all in pious uses,
Founding of colleges and grammer schools,
Marrying young virgins, building hospitals,
And now and then a church.

"*Re-enter* FACE.

"*Sub.* How now!
"*Face.* Sir, please you,
Shall I not change the filter?
"*Sub.* Marry, yes;
And bring me the complexion of glass B. [*Exit* FACE.
"*Mam.* Have you another?
"*Sub.* Yes, son; were I assured
Your piety were firm, we would not want
The means to glorify it: but I hope the best. —
I mean to tinct C in sand-heat to-morrow,
And give him imbibition.
"*Mam.* Of white oil?
"No, sir, of red. F is come over the helm too,
I thank my Maker in S. Mary's bath,
And shows *lac virginis.* Blessed be heaven!
I sent you of his fæces there calcined:
Out of that calx I have won the salt of mercury.
"*Mam.* By pouring on your rectified water?
"*Sub.* Yes, and reverberating in Athanor."

But when the object is nearly gained, there must always be some unexpected bad luck to make it retrograde. Something must be done to urge on Mammon the necessity of longer patience as well as of disbursing more gold. In the way this is accomplished there is some ingenuity; and there is some humour in the cunning observations of *Surly*: —

"*Re-enter* FACE.

"*Sub.* How now! what colour says it?
"*Face.* The ground black, sir.
"*Mam.* That 's your crow's head?

" *Sur.* Your cock's-comb's, is it not?
" *Sub.* No, 't is not perfect. Would it were the crow!
That work wants something.
" *Sub.* O, I look'd for this.
The hay's a pitching.
" *Sub.* Are you sure you loosed them
In their own menstrue?
" *Face.* Yes, sir, and then married them,
And put them in a bolt's-head nipp'd to digestion,
According as you bade me, when I set
The liquor of Mars to circulation
In the same heat.
" *Sub.* The process then was right.
" *Face.* Yes, by the token, sir, the retort brake,
And what was saved was put into the pellican,
And sign'd with Hermes' seal.
" *Sub.* I think 't was so.
We should have a new amalgama.
" *Sur.* O, this ferret
Is rank as any pole-cat. [*Aside.*
" *Sub.* But I care not:
Let him e'en die; we have enough beside,
In embrion. H has his white shirt on?
" *Face.* Yes, sir,
He 's ripe for inceration, he stands warm,
In his ash-fire. I would not you should let
Any die uow, if I might counsel, sir,
For luck's sake to the rest: it is not good.
" *Mam.* He says right.
" *Sur.* Ay, are you bolted? [*Aside.*
" *Face.* Nay, I know 't, sir,
I have seen the ill fortune. What is some three ounces
Of fresh materials?
" *Mam.* Is 't no more?
" *Face.* No more, sir,
Of gold, t' amalgame with some six of mercury.
" *Mam,* Away, here 's money. What will serve?
" *Face.* Ask him, sir.
" *Mam.* How much?
" *Sub.* Give him nine pound: — you may give him ten.
" *Sur.* Yes, twenty, and be cozen'd, do.
" *Mam.* There 't is. [*Gives* FACE *the money.*
" *Sub.* This needs not; but that you will have it so,
To see conclusions of all: for two
Of our inferior works are at fixation,
The third is in ascension. Go your ways.
Have you set the oil of luna in kemia?

" *Face*. Yes, sir.
" *Sub*. And the philosopher's vinegar?
" *Face*. Ay. [*Exit*.
" *Sur*. We shall have a sallad!
" *Mam*. When do you make projection?
" *Sub*. Son be not hasty, I exalt our med'cine,
By hanging him *in balneo vaporoso*,
And giving him solution; then congeal him;
And then dissolve him; then again congeal him:
For look, how oft I iterate the work,
So many times I add unto his virtue.
As, if at first one ounce convert a hundred,
After his second loose, he 'll turn a thousand;
His third solution, ten; his fourth, a hundred:
After his fifth, a thousand thousand ounces
Of any imperfect metal, into pure
Silver or gold, in all examinations,
As good as any of the natural mine.
Get you your stuff here against afternoon,
Your brass, your pewter, and your andirons.
" *Mam*. Not those of iron?
" *Sub*. Yes, you may bring them too:
We 'll change all metals.
" *Sur*. I believe you in that.
" *Mam*. Then I may send my spits?
" *Sub*. Yes, and your racks.
" *Sur*. And dripping-pans, and pot-hangers, and hooks,
Shall he not?
" *Sub*. If he plea
" *Sur*. — To be an ass.
" *Sub*. How, sir!
" *Mam*. This gentleman you must bear withal.
I told you he had no faith.
" *Sur*. And little hope, sir;
But much less charity, should I gull myself.
" *Sub*. Why, what have you observed, sir, in our art,
Seems so impossible?
" *Sur*. But your whole work, no more.
That you should hatch gold in a furnace, sir,
As they do eggs in Egypt!
" *Sub*. Sir, do you
Believe that eggs are hatch'd so?
" *Sur*. If I should?
" *Sub*. Why, I think that the greater miracle.
No egg but differs from a chicken more
Than metals in themselves.
" *Sur*. That cannot be.

The egg 's ordain'd by nature to that end,
And is a chicken *in potentia.*
" *Sub.* The same we say of lead, and other metals,
Which would be gold, if they had time.
" *Mum.* And that
Our art doth further.
" *Sub.* Ay, for 't were absurd
To think that nature in the earth bred gold
Perfect in the instant · something went before.
There must be remote matter.
" *Sur.* Ay, what is that?
" *Sub.* Marry, we say ——
" *Mam.* Ay, now it heats: stand, father,
Pound him to dust.
" *Sur.* It is, of the one part,
A humid exhalation, which we call
Materia liquida, or the unctuous water;
On the other part, a certain crass and viscous
Portion of earth; both which, concorporate,
Do make the elementary matter of gold;
Which is not yet *propria materia*,
But common to all metals and all stones;
For, where it is forsaken of that moisture,
And hath more driness, it becomes a stone:
Where it retains more of the humid fatness,
It turns to sulphur, or to quicksilver,
Who are the parents of all other metals.
Nor can this remote matter suddenly
Progress so from extreme unto extreme,
As to grow gold, and leap o'er all the means.
Nature at first beget the imperfect, then
Proceeds she to the perfect. Of that airy
And oily water, mercury is engender'd;
Sulphur of the fat and earthy part; the one,
Which is the last, supplying the place of male,
The other that of female, in all metals.
Some do believe hermaphrodeity,
That both do act and suffer. But these two
Make the rest ductile, malleable, extensive.
And even in gold they are; for we do find
Seeds of them, by our fire, and gold in them;
And can produce the species of each metal
More perfect thence, than nature doth in earth.
Beside, who doth not see in daily practice
Art can beget bees, hornets, beetles, wasps,
Out of the carcasses and dung of creatures;
Yea, scorpions of an herb, being rightly placed?

And these are living creatures, far more perfect
And excellent than metals.
  " *Mam.* Well said, father !
Nay, if he take you in hand, sir, with an argument,
He'll bray you in a mortar.
  " *Sur.* Pray you, sir, stay.
Rather than I'll be bray'd, sir, I'll believe
That alchemy is a pretty kind of game,
Somewhat like tricks o' the cards, to cheat a man
With charming.
  " *Sub.* Sir ?
  " *Sur.* What else are all your terms,
Whereon no one of your writers 'grees with other ?
Of your elixir, your *lac virginis*,
Your stone, your med'cine, and your chrysosperme ;
Your sal, your sulphur, and your mercury ;
Your oil of height, your tree of life, your blood,
Your marchesite, your tutie, your magnesia,
Your toad, your crow, your dragon, and your panther ;
Your sun, your moon, your firmament, your adrop,
Your lato, azoch, zernich, chibrit, heautarit ;
And then your red man, and your white woman,
With all your broths, your menstrues, and materials,
Of piss and egg-shells, women's terms, man's blood,
Hair o' the head, burnt clouts, chalk, merds, and clay ;
Powder of bones, scalings of iron, glass,
And worlds of other strange ingredients,
Would burst a man to name ?
  " *Sub.* And all these named,
Intending but one thing ; which art our writers
Used to obscure their art.
  " *Mam.* Sir, so I told him —
Because the simple ideot should not learn it,
And make it vulgar.
  " *Sub.* Was not all the knowledge
Of the Ægyptians writ in mystic symbols ?
Speak not the Scriptures oft in parables ?
Are not the choicest fables of the poets,
That were the fountains and first springs of wisdom,
Wrapp'd in perplexed allegories ? "

The profound knowledge which Jonson had of this pretended art, shows how much his studies had surpassed the ordinary standard of learning. He was a wonderful man : well might Milton say,

" When Jonson's learned sock is on."

His tragedy of *Sejanus* contains an epitome of all that the historians of antiquity have related concerning the personages of the time; and exhibits a deep acquaintance with the manners and customs, the opinions and feelings, of the Romans. It is so in every thing he undertakes: of every thing he was the master; and whether he has to describe the progress of metallic transmutation, or the most obscure point in archæology, he is equally at home.

Not the least characteristic part of this drama is where the holy brethren of Amsterdam, — the exiled Anabaptists — negotiate with this conjuror. The jargon between Subtle and Face is intended to delude the puritan Ananias, who in his way is quite as great a knave as either of them.

" *Enter* ANANIAS.

" *Sub.* Where is my drudge? [*Aloud.*

" *Re-enter* FACE.

" *Face.* Sir!
" *Sub.* Take away the recipient,
And rectify your menstrue from the phlegma.
Then pour it on the Sol, in the cucurbite,
And let them macerate together.
" *Face.* Yes, sir.
And save the ground?
" *Sub.* No: *terra damnata*
Must not have entrance in the work. — Who are you?
" *Ana.* A faithful brother, if it please you.
" *Sub.* What 's that?
A Lullianist? a Ripley? Filius artis?
Can you sublime and dulcify? calcine?
Know you the sapor pontic? sapor stiptic?
Or what is homogene, or heterogene?
" *Ana.* I understand no heathen language, truly.
" *Sub.* Heathen! you Knipper-doling? is Ars sacra,
Or chrysopœia, or spagyrica,
Or the pamphysic, or panarchic knowledge,
A heathen language?
" *Ana.* Heathen Greek, I take it.
" *Sub.* How! heathen Greek?
" *Ana.* All 's heathen but the Hebrew.
" *Sub.* Sirrah, my varlet, stand you forth and seak to him,

Like a philosopher: answer, in the language.
Name the vexations, and the martyrizations
Of metals in the work.
" *Face.* Sir, putrefaction,
Solution, ablution, sublimation,
Cohobation, calcination, ceration, and
Fixation.
" *Sub.* This is heathen Greek to you now!—
And when comes vivification?
" *Face.* After mortification.
" *Sub.* What 's cohobation?
" *Face.* 'T is the pouring on
Your aqua regis, and then drawing him off,
To the trine circle of the seven spheres.
" *Sub.* What 's the proper passion of metals?
" *Face.* Malleation.
" *Sub.* What 's your *ultimum supplicium auri?*
" *Face.* Antimonium.
" *Sub.* This is heathen Greek to you! And what 's your mercury?
" *Face.* A very fugitive, he will be gone, sir.
" *Sub.* How know you him?
" *Face.* By his viscosity,
His oleosity, and his suscitability.
" *Sub.* How do you sublime him?
" *Face.* With the calce of egg-shells,
White marble, talc.
" *Sub.* Your magisterium, now,
What 's that?
" *Face.* Shifting, sir, your elements,
Dry into cold, cold into moist, moist into hot,
Hot into dry.
" *Sub.* This is heathen Greek to you still!
Your *lapis philosophicus?*
" *Face.* 'T is a stone,
And not a stone; a spirit, a soul, and a body
Which, if you do dissolve, it is dissolv'd;
If you coagulate, it is coagulated;
If you make it to fly, it flieth.
" *Sub.* Enough. [*Exit* FACE.
This is heathen Greek to you! What are you, sir?
" *Ana.* Please you, a servant of the exiled brethren,
That deal with widows and with orphans' goods;
And make a just account unto the saints:
A deacon.
" *Sub.* O, you are sent from master Wholsome,
Your teacher?

" *Ana.* From Tribulation Wholsome,
Our very zealous pastor.
" *Sub.* Good! I have
Some orphans' goods to come here.
" *Ana.* Of what kind, sir?
" *Sub.* Pewter and brass, andirons and kitchen-ware,
Metals that we must use our medicine on:
Wherein the brethren may have a pennyworth
For ready money.
" *Ana.* Were the orphans' parents
Sincere professors?
" *Sub.* Why do you ask?
" *Ana.* Because
We then are to deal justly, and give, in truth,
Their utmost value.
" *Sub.* S'lid, you 'd cozen else,
And if their parents were not of the faithful! —
I will not trust you, now I think on it,
'Till I have talk'd with your pastor. Have you brought money
To buy more coals?
" *Ana.* No, surely.
" *Sub.* No! how so?
" *Ana.* The brethren bid me say unto you, sir,
Surely they will not venture any more,
Till they may see projection.
" *Sub.* How!
" *Ana.* You have had,
For the instruments, as bricks, and lome, and glasses,
Already thirty pound; and for materials,
They say some ninety more: and they have heard since,
That one at Heidelberg, made it of an egg,
And a small paper of pin-dust.
" *Sub.* What 's your name?
" *Ana.* My name is Ananias.
" *Sub.* Out, the varlet
That cozen'd the apostles! Hence, away!
Flee, mischief! had your holy consistory
No name to send me of another sound,
Than wicked Ananias? send your elders
Hither to make atonement for you quickly,
And give me satisfaction; or out goes
The fire; and down th' alembecs, and the furnace,
Piger Henricus, or what not. Thou wretch!
Both sericon and bufo shall be lost,
Tell them. All hope of rooting out the bishops,
Or the anti-christian hierarchy, shall perish,
If they stay threescore minutes: the aqueity,

Terreity, and sulphureity,
Shall run together again, and all be annull'd,
Thou wicked Ananias! [*Exit* ANANIAS.] This will fetch 'em,
And make them haste towards their gulling more.
A man must deal like a rough nurse, and fright
Those that are froward, to an appetite."

This is well drawn; but the following is still more admirable.

"*The Lane before* Lovewit's *House.*

"*Enter* TRIBULATION WHOLESOME, *and* ANANIAS.

"*Tri.* These chastisements are common to the saints,
And such rebukes we of the separation
Must bear with willing shoulders, as the trials
Sent forth to tempt our frailties.
"*Ana.* In pure zeal,
I do not like the man; he is a heathen,
And speaks the language of Canaan, truly.
"*Tri.* I think him a profane person indeed.
"*Ana.* He bears
The visible mark of the beast in his forehead.
And for his stone, it is a work of darkness,
And with philosophy blinds the eyes of man.
"*Tri.* Good brother, we must bend unto all means,
That may give furtherance to the holy cause.
"*Ana.* Which his cannot: the sanctified cause
Should have a sanctified course.
"*Tri.* Not always necessary:
The children of perdition are oft-times
Made instruments even of the greatest works:
Beside, we should give somewhat to man's nature,
The place he lives in, still about the fire,
And fume of metals, that intoxicate
The brain of man, and make him prone to passion.
Where have you greater atheists than your cooks?
Or more profane, or choleric, than your glass-men?
More anti-christian than your bell-founders?
What makes the devil so devilish, I would ask you,
Sathan, our common enemy, but his being
Perpetually about the fire, and boiling
Brimstone and arsenic? We must give, I say,
Unto the motives, and the stirrers up
Of humours in the blood. It may be so,
When as the work is done, the stone is made,
This heat of his may turn into a zeal,
And stand up for the beauteous discipline,

Against the menstruous cloth and rag of Rome.
We must await his calling, and the coming
Of the good spirit. You did fault t' upbraid him
With the brethren's blessing of Heidelberg, weighing
What need we have to hasten on the work,
For the restoring of the silenced saints,
Which ne'er will be, but by the philosopher's stone.
And so a learned elder, one of Scotland,
Assured me; *aurum potabile* being
The only med'cine for the civil magistrate,
T' incline him to a feeling of the cause;
And must be daily used in the disease.
"*Ana.* I have not edified more, truly, by man;
Not since the beautiful light first shone on me:
And I am sad my zeal hath so offended.
"*Tri.* Let us call on him then.
"*Ana.* The motion 's good,
And of the spirit; I will knock first. [*Knocks.*
Peace be within! [*The door is opened, and they enter.*

"SCENE II.

"*A Room in* Lovewit's *House.*

"*Enter* Subtle, *followed by* Tribulation *and* Ananias.

"*Sub.* O, are you come? 't was time. Your threescore minutes
Were at last thread, you see; and down had gone
Furnus acediæ, turris circulatorius:
Lembec, bolt's-head, retort and pelican
Had all been cinders. — Wicked Ananias!
Art though return'd? nay then it goes down yet.
"*Tri.* Sir, be appeased; he is come to humble
Himself in spirit, and to ask your patience,
If too much zeal hath carried him aside
From the due path.
"*Sub.* Why, this doth qualify!
"*Tri.* The brethren had no purpose, verily,
To give you the least grievance: but are ready
To lend their willing hands to any project
The spirit and you direct.
"*Sub.* This qualifies more!
"*Tri.* And for the orphans goods, let them be valued,
Or what is needful else to the holy work,
It shall be number'd; here, by me, the saints
Throw down their purse before you.
"*Sub.* This qualifies most!
Why, thus it should be, now you understand.

Have I discours'd so unto you of our stone,
And of the good that it shall bring your cause?
Shew'd you (beside the main of hiring forces
Abroad, drawing the Hollanders, your friends,
From the Indies, to serve you, with all their fleet)
That even the med'cinal use shall make you a faction,
And party in the realm? As, put the case,
That some great man in state, he have the gout,
Why, you but send three drops of your elixir,
You help him straight: there you have made a friend.
Another has the palsy or the dropsy,
He takes of your incombustible stuff,
He's young again: there you have made a friend.
A lady that is past the feat of body,
Though not of mind, and hath her face decay'd
Beyond all cure of paintings, you restore,
With the oil of talc: there you have made a friend;
And all her friends. A lord that is a leper,
A knight that has the bone-ach, or a squire
That hath both these, you make them smooth and sound,
With a bare fricace of your med'cine: still
You increase your friends.
  " *Tri.* Ay, it is very pregnant.
  " *Sub.* And then the turning of this lawyer's pewter
To plate at Christmas. ——
  " *Ana.* Christ-tide, I pray you.
  " *Sub.* Yet, Ananias!
  " *Ana.* I have done
  " *Sub* Or changing
His parcel gilt to mass y gold. You cannot
But raise you friends. Withal, to be of power
To pay an army in the field, to buy
The king of France out of his realms, or Spain
Out of his Indies. What can you not do
Against Lords spiritual or temporal,
That shall oppone you?
  " *Tri.* Verily, 't is true.
We may be temporal lords ourselves, I take it.
  " *Sub.* You may be any thing, and leave off to make
Long-winded exercises; or suck up
Your *ha!* and *hum!* in a tune. I not deny,
But such as are not graced in a state,
May, for their ends, be adverse in religion,
And get a tune to call the flock together:
For, to say sooth, a tune does much with woman,
And other phlegmatic people; it is your bell.
  " *Ana.* Bells are profane; a tune may be religious.

"*Sub.* No warning with you! then farewell my patience.
'Slight, it shall down: I will not be thus tortured.
"*Tri.* I pray you, sir.
"*Sub.* All shall perish. I have spoke it.
"*Tri.* Let me find grace, sir, in your eyes; the man
He stands corrected: neither did his zeal,
But as yourself, allow a tune somewhere.
Which now, being tow'rd the stone, we shall not need.
"*Sub.* No, nor your holy vizard, to win widows
To give you legacies; or make zealous wives
To rob their husbands for the common cause:
Nor take the start of bonds broke but one day,
And say, they were forfeited by providence.
Nor shall you need o'er night to eat huge meals,
To celebrate your next day's fast the better;
The whilst the brethren and the sisters humbled,
Abate the stiffness of the flesh. Nor cast
Before your hungry hearers scrupulous bones;
As whether a Christian may hawk or hunt,
Or whether matrons of the holy assembly
May lay their hair out, or wear doublets,
Or have that idle starch about their linen.
"*Ana.* It is indeed an idol.
"*Tri.* Mind him not, sir.
I do command thee, spirit of zeal, but trouble,
To peace within him! Pray you, sir, go on.
"*Sub.* Nor shall you need to libel 'gainst the prelates,
And shorten so your ears against the hearing
Of the next wire-drawn grace. Nor of necessity
Rail against plays, to please the alderman,
Whose daily custard you devour: nor lie
With zealous rage till you are hoarse. Not one
Of one of these so singular arts. Nor call yourselves
By names of Tribulation, Persecution,
Restraint, Long-patience, and such like, affected
By the whole family or wood of you,
Only for glory, and to catch the ear
Of the disciple.
"*Tri.* Truly, sir, they are
Ways that the godly brethren have invented,
For propagation of the glorious cause,
As very notable means, and whereby also
Themselves grow soon, and profitably, famous.
"*Sub.* O, but the stone, all 's idle to it! nothing!
The art of angels, nature's miracle,
The divine secret that doth fly in clouds
From east to west; and whose tradition
Is not from men, but spirits.

" *Ana.* I hate traditions;
I do not trust them. ——
" *Tri.* Peace!
" *Ana.* They are popish all.
I will not peace: I will not ——
" *Tri.* Ananias!
" *Ana.* Please the profane, to grieve the godly; I may not.
" *Sub.* Well, Ananias, thou shalt overcome.
" *Tri.* It is an ignorant zeal that haunts him, sir:
But truly, else, a very faithful brother,
A botcher, and a man, by revelation,
That hath a competent knowledge of the truth.
" *Sub.* Has he a competent sum there in the bag
To buy the goods within? I am made a guardian,
And must, for charity, and conscience sake,
Now see the most be made for my poor orphan;
Though I desire the brethren too good gainers:
There they are within. When you have view'd, and bought 'em,
And ta'en the inventory of what they are,
They are ready for projection; there 's no more
To do: cast on the med'cine, so much silver
As there is tin there, so much gold as brass,
I 'll give 't you in by weight.
" *Tri.* But how long time,
Sir, must the saints expect yet?
" *Sub.* Let me see,
How 's the moon now? Eight, nine, ten days hence,
He will be silver potate; then three days
Before he citronise. Some fifteen days
The magisterium will be perfected.
" *Ana.* About the second day of the third week,
In the ninth month?
" *Sub.* Yes, my good Ananias.
" *Tri.* What will the orphan's goods arise to, think you?
" *Sub.* Some hundred marks, as much as fill'd three cars,
Unladed now: you 'll make six millions of them. —
But I must have more coals laid in.
" *Tri.* How!
" *Sub.* Another load,
And then we have finish'd. We must now increase
Our fire to *ignus ardens*, we are past
Fimus equinus, balnei, cineris,
And all those lenter heats. If the holy purse
Should with this draught fall low, and that the saints
Do need a present sum, I have a trick
To melt the pewter, you shall buy now, instantly,

And with a tincture make you as good Dutch dollars
As any are in Holland.
“ *Tri.* Can you so?
“ *Sub.* Ay, and shall 'bide the third examination.
“ *Ana.* It will be joyful tidings to the brethern.
“ *Sub.* But you must carry it secret.
“ *Tri.* Ay; but stay,
This act of coining, is it lawful?
“ *Ana.* Lawful!
We know no magistrate; or, if we did,
This is foreign coin.
“ *Sub.* It is no coining, sir.
It is but casting.
“ *Tri.* Ha! you distinguish well:
Casting of money may be lawful.
“ *Ana.* 'Tis, sir.
“ *Tri.* Truly I take it so.
“ *Sub.* There is no scruple,
Sir, to be made of it; believe Ananias:
This case of conscience he is studied in.
“ *Tri.* I'll make a question of it to the brethren.
“ *Ana.* The brethren shall approve it lawful, doubt not.
Where shall it be done? [*Knocking without.*
“ *Sub.* For that we'll talk anon.
There's some to speak with me. Go in, I pray you,
And view the parcels. That's the inventory.
I'll come to you straight. [*Exeunt* TRIB. *and* ANA.”

We cannot enter into an analysis of the plot: we can only add a few details, the further to expose the knavery of the Alchemist. Sir Epicure Mammon is artfully inveigled into a criminal conversation with Dol Common, who is disguised as a lady. Now this, taking place, too, in the very house, would give the knavish professor a pretext for declaring that his experiments must fail. There was to be prayer — purity of heart — charity towards the poor: these were absolutely essential to success; but when lust was indulged within a few yards of the laboratory, how could the most divine of arts prosper? In a great fury Subtle rushes in, Dol Common and Face run away, and Mammon is made to bear the blame of the failure.

“ *Mam.* Where shall I hide me?
“ *Sub.* How! what sight is here?

Close deeds of darkness; and that shun the light!
Bring him again. Who is he? What, my son!
O, I have lived too long.
  " *Mam.* Nay, good, dear father,
There was no unchaste purpose.
  " *Sub.* Not! and flee me,
When I come in?
  " *Mam.* That was my error.
  " *Sub.* Error!
Guilt, guilt, my son: give it the right name. No marvel,
If I found check in our great work within,
When such affairs as these were managing!
  " *Mam.* Why, have you so?
  " *Sub.* It has stood still this half hour:
And all the rest of our less work gone back.
Where is the instrument of wickedness,
My lewd false drudge?
  " *Mam.* Nay, good sir, blame [illegible] him;
Believe me, 't was against his will or knowledge:
I saw her by chance.
  " *Sub.* Will you commit more sin,
To excuse a varlet?
  " *Mam.* By my hope, 't is true, sir,
  " *Sub.* Nay, then I wonder less, if you, for whom
The blessing was prepared, would so tempt heaven,
And lose your fortunes.
  " *Mam.* Why, sir?
  " *Sub.* This will ret[illegible]
The work, a month at [illegible]
  " *Mam.* Why, if it d[illegible]
What remedy? But think [illegible] father:
Our purposes were honest.
  " *Sub.* As they were,
So the reward will prove. [*A loud explosion within.*] — How now! ah me!
God, and all saints be good to us. —

" *Re-enter* FACE.

" What 's that?
  " *Face.* O sir, we are defeated! all the works
Are flown *in fumo*, every glass is burst:
Furnace, and all rent down! as if a bolt
Of thunder had been driven through the house.
Retorts, receivers, pelicans, bolt-heads,
All struck in shivers! [SUBTLE *falls down as in a swoon.*
Help, good sir! alas,

Coldness, and death invades him. Nay, sir Mammon,
Do the fair offices of a man! you stand,
As you were readier to depart than he."

After a little interruption, the dialogue is renewed: —

" *Mam.* Alas!
" *Face.* My brain is quite undone with the fume, sir;
I ne'er must hope to be mine own man again.
" *Mam.* Is all lost, Lungs? will nothing be preserv'd
Of all our cost?
" *Face.* Faith, very little, sir;
A peck of coals or so, which is cold comfort, sir.
" *Mam.* O, my voluptuous mind! I am justly punish'd.
" *Face.* And so am I, sir.
" *Mam.* Cast from all my hopes ——
" *Face.* Nay, certainties, sir.
" *Mam.* By mine own base affections.
" *Sub.* [*seeming to come to himself.*] O, the curst fruits of vice and lust!
" *Mam.* Good father,
It was my sin. Forgive it.
" *Sub.* Hangs my roof
Over us still, and will not fall, O justice,
Upon us, for this wicked man!
" *Face.* Nay, look, sir,
You grieve him now with staying in his sight:
Good sir, the nobleman will come too, and take you,
And that may breed a tragedy.
" *Mam.* I 'll go.
" *Face.* Ay, and repent at home, sir. It may be,
For some good penance you may have it yet;
A hundred pound to the box at Bethlem ——
" *Mam.* Yes.
" *Face.* For the restoring such as — have their wits.
" *Mam.* I 'll do 't.
" *Face.* I 'll send one to you to receive it.
" *Mam.* Do.
Is no projection left?
" *Face.* All flown, or stinks, sir.
" *Mam.* Will nought be saved that 's good for med'cine, think'st thou?
" *Face.* I cannot tell, sir. There will be perhaps,
Something about the scraping of the shards,
Will cure the itch,— though not your itch of mind, sir. [*Aside.*
It shall be saved for you, and sent home. Good sir,
This way for fear the lord should meet you. [*Exit* MAMMON.

"*Sub.* [*raising his head.*] Face!
"*Face.* Ay.
"*Sub.* Is he gone?
"*Face.* Yes, and as heavily
As all the gold he hoped for were in 's blood.
Let us be light though.
"*Sub.* [*leaping down.*] Ay, as balls, and bound
And hit our heads against the roof for joy:
There 's so much of our care now cast away."

This drama, every reader will acknowledge to be a wonderful one: it has never been surpassed by the most glorious effort of genius.

Catiline, the next production of our author, was brought out in 1611. It displays, as usual, a profound knowledge of the period to which it relates. All that antiquity could furnish in reference to the many characters introduced, has been laid under rigid contribution. It is a most elaborate work of art. It had, however, or we should perhaps say for that very reason, little success on the stage. The speeches are too long, the plot too narrow, the incidents too few, to have any charm in representation. In the closet, it will be read with pleasure, so long as learning and genius have any attractions. Of the former there is far too much for any where but the close' and we may say for any other reader than the scholar. "The number of writers," says Mr. Gifford, "whom Jonson has consulted, and the industry and care with which he has extracted from them every circumstance conducive to the elucidation of his plot, can only be conceived by those who have occasion to search after his authorities. He has availed himself of almost every scattered hint, from the age of Sallust to that of Elizabeth, for the correct formation of his characters, and placed them before our eyes as they appear in the writings of those who lived and acted with them." True; but this is one of the worst qualifications that any dramatist could have, who should aspire to popular favour. As was truly observed in *The Return from Parnassus*,— these university pens did not please the public,— Jonson's the least of any.

He was, indeed, too conversant with antiquity, too fond it, to be agreeable to the generation of his day.

In 1612 — probably late in the year — Jonson went abroad. How long he remained, can be matter of conjecture only; but he was at Paris in 1613. Cardinal du Perron showed him a French translation of Virgil, which he had the bluntness to condemn. His manner was never very courteous; and though we must praise his honesty, we may yet think that without violating truth, he might have awarded some degree of praise to a scholar, less profound, indeed, than himself, but still a scholar, and by no means undistinguished. — What other countries he visited, we know not, nor do we know the period of his return. He was again in London in 1614, since in that year he brought out at the Hope theatre his farce of *Bartholomew Fair*. This piece has been too much praised. It does not exhibit much genius, but it does show an intimate knowledge of the lowest and most vicious forms of metropolitan life. The incidents are for the most part exceptionable; the dialogue is extremely gross. There is, indeed, some humour in the ridicule thrown over the puritans; and this is the only redeeming feature of the farce. It may be, and no doubt is, a true description of that kind of life to which it relates; and for this reason it will have some interest for the philosopher or the historian. But this reality of portraiture does not, in the least degree, diminish the feeling of disgust. And here Jonson is censurable: he might have drawn the picture with fewer touches of depravity: but he delights in them; he is perpetually displaying them; and he presses into his dialogue so many oaths, so many profane expressions, as to leave in the reader's mind a conviction that his conceptions were exceedingly gross. No pure, no delicate, no fine, no virtuous mind would, or could, have raked together such a heap of filth. All this, no doubt, was exceedingly agreeable to the mob, both high and low, — to the fishmonger's apprentice as to Charles II. All, especially the character of *Cokes*, was amazingly relished by that

monarch,—a fact sufficient to characterize the whole production, better than the most elaborate criticism.

From 1614 to 1616 we hear little of Jonson. In the latter year he produced his comedy of *The Devil is an Ass.* This is the last of his dramatic productions which we have patience to read. It is full of satire; it has some wit: it has considerable vigour; and the characters are well delineated. Add that it has a more moral tendency than most of his other pieces, and we have said all that can be said in its praise. There is reason to believe that he was become tired of the stage: —such, at least, is the inference from his own statements;—nor can we be surprised at this, when we consider how many men, immeasurably inferior to him, were more successful. He felt conscious of his own superiority; and he could not respect a public which made no distinction, or, if it did, one against him, between judgment and conceit, between dignity and bombast. This year, too, he lost Shakespear. There is no reason to suppose that he had ever, for any length of time, been on terms of enmity with that illustrious man. Certainly he always spoke of Shakespear with great regard,—as one whom he loved even to idolatry. That he should feel dissatisfied with the immeasurably superior success of the bard of Avon, was natural; he could not, in fact, feel otherwise; but this rivalship never, or at least but once, dissevered the connection between them. Down to 1603, Shakespear acted in some of his characters; and would probably have acted in more, had he not retired from the histrionic part of the profession.

There is reason to think that our author was always well rewarded by James. This year (1616) he was presented with a pension for life of 100 marks. The letters-patent confirming the grant do not give him the title of laureate; but they virtually constituted him such: he was the first poet who enjoyed a fixed annual sum from the court. Daniel, his predecessor, has been honoured with the same title; but Daniel had no sa-

lary, — nothing more than the gratuities awarded to occasional services. This pension might be useful to Jonson: it has been pernicious to the drama. From 1616 to 1625 he did not write a single play; nor would he have resumed the occupation, had not his necessities (the result of his imprudence) compelled him. It was the same with Shakespear. After he became easy in his circumstances, he wrote little.

In 1618, Jonson visited Scotland. He had long been on friendly terms with the most distinguished literary men of the country; and, in conformity with their invitations, he resolved to pass some time at their hospitable boards. In what mansions he was entertained, we know not; but his last visit was to Drummond of Hawthornden, the poet. This circumstance has been rendered memorable by the writers of both nations. The English have contended that Drummond was a faithless host, a perfidious friend; that he took down the conversations of his guest with the intention of exposing them to the world. The Scotch vindicate their countryman from the charge of malevolence; they contend that he took down the opinions of his guest exactly as he heard them, — without any design of publishing them, and for his own information, since they were entitled to great respect from the eminent rank of Jonson in the world of letters. It cannot reasonably be denied that Drummond was justifiable in wishing to preserve some record of Jonson's opinions: why should he be more blamed than a Boswell for the same act? The only question is, whether, as one party asserts, Drummond performed the task in a spirit of malevolence; whether he mutilated the observations; whether he artfully suppressed the explanatory, the connecting matter that would have rendered the whole less repulsive. To judge of this, let us make a few extracts: —

"His censure (judgment) of the English poets was this: that Sidney did not keep a decorum in making every one speak as well as himself. Spenser's stanza pleased him not, nor his matter; the meaning of the Allegory of his *Fairy*

Queen he had delivered in writing to sir Walter Raleigh, which was, that by the bleating (blatant) beast, he understood the Puritans, and by the false Duessa, the queen of Scots. He told, that Spenser's goods were robbed by the Irish, and his house and a little child burnt, he and his wife escaped, and after died for want of bread, in King-street: he refused twenty pieces sent him by my lord Essex, and said he was sure he had no time to spend them. Samuel Daniel was a good, honest man, had no children, and was no poet; and that he had wrote the *Civil Wars*, and yet had not one battle in all his book. That Michael Drayton's *Polyolbion*, if he had performed what he promised, to write the deeds of all the Worthies, had been excellent. That he was challenged for intituling one book *Mortimeriades*: that sir John Davies played on Drayton in an epigram, who, in his sonnet, concluded his mistress might have been the ninth Worthy, and said, he used a phrase like Dametas in *Arcadia*, who said his mistress for wit might be a giant.

"That Silvester's translation of Du Bartas was not well done; and that he wrote his verses before he understood to confer; and these of Fairfax were not good. That the translations of Homer and Virgil in long Alexandrines, were but prose. That sir John Harington's *Ariosto*, under all translations, was the worst: that when sir John desired him to tell the truth of his Epigrams, he answered him, that he loved not the truth, for they were narrations, not epigrams. He said Donne was originally a poet, his grandfather on the mother side was Heywood the epigrammatist · that Donne for want of being understood would perish. He esteemed him the first poet in the world for some things; his verses of the lost Orchadine he had by heart, and that passage of the Calm, "that dust and feathers did not stir, all was so quiet." He affirmed that Donne wrote all his best pieces before he was twenty-five years of age: the conceit of Donne's Transformation, or Μετεμψυχωσις, was, that he sought the soul of that apple, which Eve pulled and thereafter made it the soul of a bitch, then of a she-wolf, and so of a woman: his general purpose was to have brought it into all the bodies of the heretics from the soul of Cain, and at last left it in the body of Calvin. He only wrote one sheet of this, and since he was made a Doctor, repented hugely, and resolved to destroy all his poems. He told Donne that his *Anniversary* was profane and full of blasphemies; that if it had been written on the Virgin Mary, it had been tolerable: to which Donne answered, that he described the idea of a woman, and not as she was. He said Shakspeare wanted art, and sometimes sense, for in one of his plays, he brought in a number of men, saying

they had suffered ship-wreck, in Bohemia, where is no sea near by a hundred miles. That sir Walter Raleigh esteemed more fame than conscience. The best wits in England were employed in making his history; Ben himself had written a piece to him of the Punick War, which he altered and set in his book.

"He said there was no such ground for an Heroic Poem as king Arthur's fiction; and that sir P. Sidney had an intention to have transformed all his Arcadia, to the stories of king Arthur. He said Owen was a poor pedantic schoolmaster, sweeping his living from the posteriors of little children, and had nothing good in him, his epigrams being bare narrations. Francis Beaumont died before he was thirty years of age, who, he said, was a good poet, as were Fletcher and Chapman, whom he loved. That sir William Alexander was not half kind to him, and neglected him, because a friend to Drayton: that sir R. Ayrton loved him dearly. He fought several times with Marston; and says, that Marston wrote his father-in-law's preachings, and his father-in-law his comedies."

Few men, we believe, will approve some of these remarks. Still we do not see that they are ill-natured. Their great defect is, that Drummond neglected to explain and connect them; they are too much abridged. In this form they never could be delivered; the fault, therefore, is Drummond's. Yet we are not disposed to visit, with much severity, his want of judgment in giving these naked remarks to the press. Though they seem to be unjust on the speaker, we are not sure that Drummond intended them to be so. So far we see little to condemn in either of the friends.

"His judgment of stranger poets was, That he thought not Bartas a poet, but a verser, because he wrote not fiction. He cursed Petrarch for redacting verses into sonnets, which he said was like that tyrant's bed, where some who were too short, were racked, others too long cut short. That Guafini in his *Pastor Fido* kept no decorum in making shepherds speak as well as himself. That he told cardinal du Perron (when he wes in France, 1613), who shewed him his transla- of Virgil, that it was nought; that the best pieces of sard were his Odes. [*But all this was to no purpose,* our author) *for he never understood the French or Italian uages.*] He said Petronius, Plinius Secundus, and utus spoke best Latin; and that Tacitus wrote the secrets the council and senate, as Suetonius did those of the

cabinet and court: that Lucan, taken in parts, was excellent, but altogether, naught: that Quintilian's 6, 7, and 8 books were not only to be read, but altogether digested: that Juvenal, Horace, and Martial were to be read for delight, and so was Pindar; but Hippocrates for health.

"Of the English nation he said, that Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* was best for church-matters, and Selden's *Titles of Honour* for antiquities.—Here our author relates that the censure (judgment) of his verses was — That they were all good, especially his Epitaph on Prince Henry, save that they smelled too much of the schools, and were not after the fancy of the times: for a child, says he, may write after the fashion of the Greek and Latin verse in running, yet that he wished for pleasing the king, that piece of *Forth Feasting* had been his own."

In the first of these paragraphs there is an addition by Drummond, not consistent with truth. Ben Jonson was not ignorant of French, — probably not of Italian. His works contain ample proof of it. He praised, he observes, Silvester's translation of Du Bartas, *before* he was able to compare it with the original: surely this implies that he *afterwards* acquired the ability, especially when he declares that his opinion of the book was totally changed — that what he once praised, he now condemned. Nor could he judge of the cardinal du Perron's fidelity as a translator, without understanding the language of that translation. He might, indeed, converse in Latin with the cardinal, for Latin was then the universal language of men of letters; but he could not undertake to criticise French poetry without something more than a common acquaintance with the language. As to the Italian, we will not be positive; but the *Pastor Fido* had not, at this time, been translated; and we know not how Jonson, if he were ignorant of the language, could have given, respecting that poem, so just an opinion. Here it is impossible to absolve Drummond from the charge of malevolence.

The second paragraph, trimmed as it has been by Drummond himself, contains something which must have given umbrage to that vain man. *His* works were all good, save that they smelled too much of the

schools, and were not in the manner of the day, — a child in running might write after the fashion of the Greek and Latin verse. This is the head and front of the offence. Jonson's praise was not unqualified. This could never be forgiven; and we are therefore not surprised at the following character of the Englishman: —

"— For he says, Ben Jonson was a great lover and praiser of himself, a contemner and scorner of others, given rather to lose a friend than a jest, jealous of every word and action of those about him, especially after drink, which is one of the elements in which he lived: a dissembler of the parts which reign in him; a bragger of some good that he wanted; thinketh nothing well done but what either he himself or some of his friends have said or done. He is passionately kind and angry, careless either to gain or keep; vindictive, but if he be well answered, at himself; interprets best sayings and deeds often to the worst. He was for any religion, as being versed in both; oppressed with fancy which hath overmastered his reason, a *general* disease in *many* poets: his inventions are smooth and easy, but above all he excelleth in a translation. When the play of the *Silent Woman* was first acted, there were found verses after on the stage against him, concluding that that play was well named the *Silent Woman*, because there was never one *man* to say Plaudite to it."

The animus with which this paragraph is written needs no comment: it is in the worst possible spirit. Jonson had no such malevolence. After his return to London (in 1619), he wrote in the kindest terms to Drummond; and that the latter was equally warm in his professions, is evident from the following letter, "to his worthy friend, Master Ben Jonson."

"Sir, — Here you have the epigram which you desired, with another of the late argument. If there be any other thing in this country which my power can reach, command it: there is nothing I wish more than to be in the catalogue of them that love you. I have heard from court that the late masque* was not so approved by the king as in former times, and that your claim was rejected. Such applause hath true worth even of those who are not for it. Thus to the next occasion taking my leave, I remain your loving friend, W. D."

* This masque had been composed by some other person during the absence of Jonson.

If Jonson were what Drummond describes him, "a contemner and scorner of others" — a drunkard — a hypocrite — a vain braggart — irascible — vindictive — ill-natured — an infidel — how came Drummond to profess so much love for him? If the professions were sincere, he was not very nice in the choice of his friend; if they were not, who was the hypocrite? By no sophistry can his language on the two occasions be reconciled. Whatever Jonson was, Drummond was undoubtedly a dissembler, and a malignant one.*

In 1619, Jonson was at Oxford, where he was honoured by a degree. It could, however, do him no good; and we know not why he should be ambitious of so childish a distinction, — one held by the ignorant Greene, and others who were stupid as well as ignorant. At this time, especially from the grant of his pension, he seems to have been more than ever employed in the composition of masques. We may condemn him for this courtly trifling; but probably we should be unjust. He was not a popular dramatist; and he was disgusted at the reception which some of his noblest attempts had met with from the citizens. He must live; and if the means of life were not afforded him in one quarter, he had a right to seek them in another. Yet his time was not wholly engrossed by these idle pageants. He wrote other pieces, — a Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics, an English Grammar, a Journey into Scotland, a Life of Henry V., and some poems, all of which unfortunately perished in the flames. Still, when we perceive that he invented many masques, for the nobility, no less than for the court, we may censure his almost entire devotion to that puerile occupation, during some years of his life. That he found them more profitable than the most serious labours, cannot be denied. For them James gave him the reversionary grant of the office of master

* We have no predilection for, no prejudice against, Drummond or his nation. Our object is truth. While we condemn the acerbity of Mr. Gifford, whose bile was overflowing, we equally condemn the injudicious, the blind zeal of the Scotch. For a specimen of this feeling, see Mr. Peter Cunningham's recent edition of Drummond. If the English biographer is prejudiced, the Scottish one is, at least, equally so.

of the revels, and offered him the honour of knighthood. The first, however, he did not live to enjoy, and the latter he had the wisdom to decline. Still he knew that he was in the way of favour, and consequently of profit; and he was content to waste his noble powers, to exchange future renown for present advantage. But he did not calculate justly. After the death of James (1625), he soon found that he had lost a patron. Charles was not so fond of literature, nor so kind to his servants, as his father; and the evil days of our poet were at hand. To his impaired resources we must add another calamity,—an attack of palsy, which he first experienced the year of his royal patron's death, and which found him unprepared: he had saved nothing; and so sickness and poverty were about to make him theirs for the remainder of his days.

The year in which his misfortunes commenced, he again reverted to the stage, and brought out his *Staple of News*. This is somewhat inferior to his preceding comedy of 1616, — *The Devil is an Ass*: it is among his third rate productions. His complaint, indeed, confined him to his room; it enfeebled both his body and mind, and rendered him lamentably unequal to his former efforts. In this state he produced another comedy, — *The New Inn*, which every lover of his fame would wish to forget. It was, indeed, an unfortunate production, and was driven with contempt from the stage. Now was the time for his enemies to triumph, and they did not allow it to pass: they fell upon him with an unmanly, an ungenerous, a brutal shout. Much of this, indeed, was retribution; he now suffered what he had inflicted on others; but we have no reason to believe that he had ever struck the sick, that he had ever insulted the helpless, that he had ever derided the most awful affliction of our nature. One good resulted from this failure of his piece; the king, touched by his necessities, sent him one hundred pounds. Charles did more: he raised the pension from one hundred marks to one hundred pounds, and added a tierce of

canary. This was princely, but it did not release Jonson from his difficulties. He no longer received the handsome gratuities from the court, or from the nobles, or from the city companies. As his fame was declining; Inigo Jones, formerly his friend, now his enemy, was thought to have greater talent for pageants; he fell, neglected, into comparative oblivion. We hear of him only from his applications to the great for pecuniary relief. The pension, with the wine, was surely enough to support him; but he was always a stranger to worldly prudence: "what was liberally given," says Gifford, "he lavishly spent, and he was seldom free from want." Even now, that he was excluded from so many sources of profit — that he was not wanted to compose masques and pageants for court, nobility, or city companies — he lived as expensively as in his most prosperous days.

Melancholy as was now the situation of Jonson, — one of sickness and poverty, — it was the more incumbent to exercise his talents, impaired as they were. Though he had no longer any hope from the stage, he did not wholly forsake it. In 1632 he produced at the Blackfriars his comedy of *The Magnetic Lady*. It was somewhat coldly received. It could not be otherwise; for though it is not without some merit, it will not bear comparison with even the second rate of his former dramas. His muse, as he truly observes, was "bed-ridden and afflicted." The following year appeared the last of his dramas which was represented, *The Tale of a Tub*. It is little deserving of notice. Yet we do not sanction the harsh dictum of Dryden, that his last plays were his "dotages." If they were inferior — much inferior — to what we might expect from the author, they were equal in merit to the average productions of most writers of his day.

One bright and sunny ray, says Mr. Gifford, broke through the gloom that hung over his closing hours. In them he produced his *Sad Shepherd*, "a poeti-

cal drama of exquisite beauty." Half of it has been lost, and we cannot speak so confidently of its merits as this biographer. We are far from thinking the praise justified. But praise or censure was about to have no effect on the effort or the subject: his infirmities had now brought him to the verge of the tomb. Of his behaviour in the last scene of his life, we have not so much information as we could desire. He expressed much contrition for his profanation of the sacred name in his plays; and from this fact we may infer that his death was not without benefit to himself, or edification to others. He died in August, 1637, in his sixty-fourth year. His place of sepulture was Westminster Abbey. A noble monument was to be raised to his memory; but the troubles of the times prevented it. A plain stone was placed over his remains, with the inscription, *O rare Ben Jonson!*

Of Jonson's character we have already spoken so frequently as to render a laboured description superfluous. From many of the aspersions with which it has been covered, he has been triumphantly cleared by Mr. Gifford. He was open, good-natured, candid, warm in his attachments, and correct in his morals, independent in mind, and much esteemed by his more intimate acquaintance. All this may be conceded; yet he had defects. His opinion of himself led him frequently to depreciate others. His quickness of temper frequently ended in anger; but if he was irascible, he was not malignant. Such a man was sure to make enemies; and he had too much pride to solicit pardon even when he had offended most grievously. He was certainly haughty, unbecomingly so, in his treatment of those whose rivalship he dreaded, or whose persons he disliked. Vanity was his besetting sin; whoever did not yield to him, was sure to be lightly esteemed by him. He was, however, sociable enough with those whom he loved; and he was courteous enough when his will was not contradicted. His attachment to society led him into another evil, — intemperance.

On Jonson's dramatic powers, much has been written, but little that can be called good. His last biographer, however, has delineated them with a masterly hand; and from him we extract the following paragraph: —

"It has been the practice of the poet's biographers to institute a comparison between him and Shakspeare. These parallels have not been always 'after the manner of Plutarch;' but indeed, their utility in any case will not be very apparent; unless it should be admitted, that Shakspeare is best set off by throwing every object brought near him into shade. Shakspeare wants no light but his own. As he never has been equalled, and in all human probability never will be equalled, it seems an invidious employ, at best, to speculate minutely on the precise degree in which others fell short of him. Let him, with his own Julius Cæsar, *bestride the narrow world like a colossus;* that is his due; but let not the rest be compelled to *walk under his huge legs, and peep about to find themselves dishonourable graves.* — 'Putting aside, therefore, (as Cumberland says), any further mention of Shakspeare, who was a poet out of all rule, and beyond all compass of criticism, one whose excellencies are above comparison, and whose errors beyond number,' I return to our author.

"The judgment of Jonson was correct and severe, and his knowledge of human nature extensive and profound. He was familiar with the various combinations of the humours and affections, and with the nice and evanescent tints by which the extremes of opposing qualities melt into one another, and are lost to the vulgar eye; but the art which he possessed in perfection, was that of marking in the happiest manner the different shades of the same quality, in different minds, so as to discriminate the voluptuous from the voluptuous, the covetous from the covetous, &c.

"In what Hurd calls 'picturing,' he was excellent. His characters are delineated with a breadth and vigour as well as truth that display a master hand; his figures stand prominent on the canvas, bold and muscular, though not elegant; his attitudes, though sometimes ungraceful, are always just, while his strict observation of proportion (in which he was eminently skilled,) occasionally mellowed the hard and rigid tone of his colouring, and by the mere force of symmetry gave a warmth to the whole, as pleasing as it was unexpected. Such, in a word, was his success, that it may be doubted whether he has been surpassed or even equalled by any of those who have attempted to tread in his steps. The striking failure of

Decker, in Captain Tucca, has been already noticed; that of Congreve, in Noll Bluff, is still more marked. Congreve designed it, Whalley says, for an imitation of Bobadil: but Noll is a beaten idiot, a character too contemptible for farce, and fit only to amuse the rabble round the stage of a mountebank. Even Ford, if we can suppose for a moment that Shakspeare had Kitely in view, will scarcely be allowed to be either so just, so natural, or so respectable a character as his prototype.

"In the plots of his comedies, which were constructed from his own materials, he is deserving of undisputed praise. Without violence, without, indeed, any visible effort, the various events of the story are so linked together, that they have the appearance of accidental introduction; yet they all contribute to the main design, and support that just harmony which alone constitutes a perfect fable. Such, in fact, is the rigid accuracy of his plans, that it requires a constant and almost painful attention to trace out their various bearings and dependencies. Nothing is left to chance; before he sat down to write, he had evidently arranged every circumstance in his mind; preparations are made for incidents which do not immediately occur, and hints are dropped which can only be comprehended, at the unravelling of the piece. The play does not end with Jonson, because the fifth act is come to a conclusion; nor are the most important events precipitated, and the most violent revolutions of character suddenly effected, because the progress of the story has involved the poet in difficulties from which he cannot otherwise extricate himself. This praise, whatever be its worth, is enhanced by the rigid attention paid to the unities; to say nothing of those of place and character, that of time is so well observed in most of his comedies, that the representation occupies scarcely an hour more on the stage than the action would require in real life.

"With such extraordinary requisites for the stage, joined to a strain of poetry always manly, frequently lofty, and sometimes almost sublime, it may, at first, appear strange that his dramas are not more in vogue; but a little attention to his peculiar modes and habits of thinking will, perhaps, enable us in some measure to account for it. The grace and urbanity which mark his lighter pieces he laid aside whenever he approached the stage, and put on the censor with the sock. This system (whether wise or unwise) naturally led to circumstances which affect his popularity as a writer; he was obliged, as one of his critics justly observes, 'to hunt down his own characters,' and, to continue the metaphor, he was frequently carried too far in the chase.

"But there are other causes which render his comedies less

amusing than the masterly skill employed upon them would seem to warrant our expecting. Jonson was the painter of humours, not of passions. It was not his object (supposing it to have been in his power) to assume a leading passion, and so mix and qualify it with others incidental to our common nature, as to produce a being instantly recognized as one of our kind. Generally speaking, his characters have but one predominating quality: his merit (wha ever it be) consists in the felicity with which he combines a certain number of such personages, distinct from one another, into a well ordered and regular plot, dexterously preserving the unities of time and place, and exhibiting all the probabilities which the most rigid admirer of the ancient models could possibly demand. Passions indeed, like humours, may be unamiable; but they can scarcely be uninteresting. There is a natural loftiness and swelling in ambition, love, hatred, &c., which fills the mind, and, when tempered with the gentler feelings, interests while it agitates. Humours are far less tractable. If they fortunately happen to contain in themselves the seeds of ridicule; then, indeed, like the solemn vanity of Bobabil and the fantastic gravity of Puntarvolo, they become the source of infinite amusement; but this must not always be looked for: nor should we degrade Jonson by considering him in the light of a dramatic writer, bound, like the miserable hirelings of the modern stage, to produce a certain *quantum* of laughter. Many humours and modes of common life are neither amusing in themselves, nor capable of being made so by any extraneous ingenuity whatever: the vapourers in *Bartholomew Fair*, and the jeerers in the *Staple of News*, are instances in point.—But further, Jonson would have defeated his own purpose, if he had attempted to elicit entertainment from them: he wished to exhibit them in an odious and disgusting light, and thus to extirpate what he considered as pests, from the commerce of real life. It was in the character of the poet to bring forward such nuisances as interrupted the peace, or disturbed the happiness of private society; and he is therefore careful to warn the audience, in his occasional addresses, that it is less his aim to *make their cheeks red* with laughter, than to feast their understanding, and minister to their rational improvement. 'At all the theatres,' says Mr. Malone (*Shak.* vol. ii. p. 177.), 'it appears that noise and shew were what chiefly attracted an audience.' Of these Jonson had little; indeed, he always speaks of them with dislike: and he was so sensible that he must be heard with attention to effect that *profit* which he professed to mingle with *delight*, that his prologues are invariably directed to this end.

There is yet another obstacle to the poet's popularity,

besides the unamiable and uninteresting nature of some of his characters, namely, a want of just discrimination. He seems to have been deficient in that true tact or feeling of propriety which Shakspeare possessed in full excellence. He appears to have had an equal value for all his characters, and he labours upon the most unimportant, and even disagreeable of them with the same fond and paternal assiduity which accompanies his happiest efforts. He seldom appears to think that he has said enough; he does not perceive that he has wearied his audience, and that all attention is withdrawn from his exertions: and he continues, like the unfortunate lutanist of Dryden, to finger his instrument long after it has ceased to make music to any ear but his own.

"What has been said applies chiefly to his comedies. His tragedies, of which two only are come down to us, do not call for much additional remark. Both are taken from the Roman story, and he has apparently succeeded in his principal object, which was to exhibit the characters of the drama to the spectators of his days, precisely as they appeared to those of their own. The plan was scholastic, but it was not judicious. The difference between the dramatis personæ and the spectators was too wide; and the very accuracy to which he aspired would seem to take away much of the power of pleasing. Had he drawn men instead of Romans, his success might have been more assured; but the ideas, the language, the allusions, could only be readily caught by the contemporaries of Augustus and Tiberius; and it redounds not a little to the author's praise, that he has familiarised us, in some measure, to the living features of an age so distant from our own."

All this is founded in truth; but too favourable. The *plots* of Jonson are, in some dramas, too complicated to be much relished. Had they been simpler, more intelligible, they would have been deserving of the praise Mr. Gifford has bestowed on them. They are constructed with too much art. His *characters* are, in general, unequalled, both for truth and vigour; but they, too, are not always such as are to be found in life. As we have before observed, he sometimes mistook the exception for the rule. His *manners* may be those of the age, or rather of a particular society in that age; but they are not universally true. He studied human nature in its aberrations rather than in its general tenor; he studied humours, not pas-

sions; local feelings, not permanent sentiments. Take him, however, for all in all, and he is perhaps inferior to no English dramatist, Shakespear only excepted.

Connected with the biography and the labours of Ben Jonson, are those of two dramatists, whom we shall associate with him,

Beaumont and Fletcher.

These remarkable men, of whom the former died in 1616, the latter in 1625, must, in conformity with established usage, be classed together. In fact their lives cannot be separated. They lived together, and wrote together; nor is it, in most instances, possible to distinguish the contributions which they made to the same drama.

John Fletcher was the son of Dr. Richard Fletcher, bishop of London. This Richard Fletcher was held in much consideration by queen Elizabeth. He had indeed been her ready instrument on at least one occasion, in which no divine of decency or of character would have interfered, — this was at the execution of the unfortunate Mary, queen of Scots, whose last moments he embittered by his absurd attempts to convert her. His conduct on that occasion was disgusting. But it had the effect he designed: it recommended him greatly to his own royal mistress, who raised him to the see of Bristol. He had, however, other friends to please; and he is said to have gratified them by placing under their charge a portion of his episcopal revenues. This indeed was a very frequent crime, — so frequent as to create no surprise. Some of the men whom we have been taught to regard as patriots, and as holy men, were guilty of the same sacrilege: they were eager to hold certain episcopal lands, and to farm them

* This article is derived from Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss; from Baker's Biographia Dramatica; from Fuller's Worthies of England, vol. i. (Kent); from Camden's Annals of Elizabeth; from Baker's Chronicle of England; from Dryden's Essay on Dramatic Poetry; from Cibber's Lives of the Poets; from Nichol's Leicestershire.

out to others; nor did the prelates, who had need of their interest, resist the proposal: in fact one half of these churchmen owed their dignities to some compact of this nature. From Bristol Dr. Fletcher was translated in 1592 to Worcester; and to London early in 1595. He did not, however, much longer enjoy the favour of his royal mistress. He had the temerity to marry a second time, — a thing which Elizabeth condemned in any ecclesiastic, much more a bishop; and he was suspended, at her command, by the archbishop of Canterbury. After some months, however, he was restored to his functions, — probably through a few convenient bribes to Burleigh and other courtiers, — but he could not appear at court. He did not long survive this event: he died, if Camden and Fuller are correct, through excessive use of tobacco, — no unfit termination to so pernicious a career as his. Altogether he was certainly one of the worst ecclesiastics of a bad age.

John Fletcher was born in 1576. He was educated at Cambridge; but there he took no degree. As he was only twenty on his father's death, he had not the power to obtain church preferment; and this circumstance, joined with his poetical taste, probably deterred him from entering into holy orders. He is said to have composed a play as early as 1596; but this is certainly untrue: the Fletcher there mentioned was *Laurence* Fletcher, the associate of Shakespear.* We have no evidence to prove that he *alone* wrote anything prior to 1606, when the *Woman Hater* appeared. There is, indeed, a tradition (mentioned by Dryden), that he composed two or three unsuccessful pieces before the representation of that drama; but probably he wrote in conjunction with some other writer. This was the taste of the age. During the last thirteen years of Elizabeth's reign, and during all that of James I, partnerships of two, three, or four writers, in the same dramatic piece, were more common than single labours

* See the Life of Shakespear.

of the kind. Shakespear himself had, in many of the pieces attributed to him, his coadjutors, of whom some were little worthy of the honour. The *Woman-Hater* was followed by *Thierry*, also the entire composition of Fletcher. This next piece, *Philaster*, was written in conjunction with Beaumont.

Francis Beaumont was also of an ancient and honourable family, which had been seated at Grace-Dieu, in Leicestershire, many generations. His father, one of the judges of the Common Pleas, was a man of some literature. Whether his eldest brother, sir Henry Beaumont, knight, had the same taste, we are not informed; but his junior brother, sir John Beaumont, was a distinguished poet. Francis himself, the youngest of the three brothers, was born at Grace-Dieu, in, we are told, 1586. This date, however, is scarcely reconcileable with the fact, that in 1596, he was entered of Broadgate-hall, now Pembroke College: we know of no instance of so early a matriculation; and we are inclined to suspect the accuracy of one or other of the dates. This is the more probable, as there were at least three persons of the name contemporary with each other. Another circumstance throws great discredit on the date assigned. It is admitted that he remained some years at the university; it is admitted, too, that he was for some years afterwards a student of the Inner Temple; yet if, as we all know to be the fact, he forsook the legal profession and attached himself to the stage as early as 1606, or perhaps the preceding year, twenty years will appear too short a time for all these objects. We may add, that the period usually assigned for his dramatic career,—ten years,—is insufficient for the production of so great a number of dramas as he either composed himself, or assisted others to compose. However this be, his bias towards poetry is the only reason we can divine for his abandonment of the legal profession, — a profession in which his father had been eminent, and for which he was, doubtless, designed by his family. The facility with which he exchanged lucrative for a precarious

means of support, leads us to surmise that he was hereditarily endowed with the goods of fortune, so as to render pecuniary recompense an object of little value. In no passage of his life do we read of that curse, poverty, — a curse more heavily felt by the dramatic writer than any other man who toils for his daily bread.

Whether Beaumont, prior to his connection with Fletcher, wrote any dramatic pieces, either of his own or in conjunction with any other writer, is very doubtful. We have nothing in support of the affirmative beyond the vague tradition, that both he and Fletcher wrote unsuccessful dramas prior to the first of their joint production, *Philaster*. He *might*, however, have assisted other and less eminent writers than his coadjutor: and it is almost reasonable to infer that he did so; for the tragedy in question does not seem in any part the offspring of an unpractised pen. Be this as it may, he had attracted some degree of attention by his verses. In 1602, he published his *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, — a well-known classical fable, which he paraphrased in tedious verse. His verses to Ben Jonson, on the comedy of *The Fox*, are indeed more worthy of his pen. "At the age of nineteen," says a modern editor*, "he addressed a copy of verses to the former, replete with the soundest criticism, and evidencing a familiar acquaintance with the ancient drama; thus justifying the high opinion which was entertained by his contemporaries of his superior judgment, particularly by Jonson, who is said to have submitted the plots of his dramatic performances to his young friend." Here are some inaccuracies: the verses exhibit no criticism whatever; still less do they show any knowledge of the ancient drama. They are very tame, very prosaic, very common-place. Jonson *might* show the plots of his dramas to "his young friend;" but was he himself much older? He was only

* Mr. Henry Weber, in his Introduction to the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher.

thirty at the time these verses were composed, and we have reason to suspect that Francis Beaumont was not much younger. There can, however, be no doubt, that as early as 1606 or 1607 the latter was known, if not to the public, to many of the writers by profession, then resident in the metropolis; and that the anticipations of his future success were favourable.

Fletcher's first drama, — the first, we mean, so far as we can determine the date — was, as we have already observed, *The Woman-Hater*. It was not successful; and a short analysis of the plot will show that it did not deserve to be. — *Gondarino*, general of the duke of Milan, is a mortal hater of women. He has had a wife, whose memory, for some cause or other, he detests, and for her sake the whole sex. He will not speak to women, nor listen to them, nor come into their presence. A lady, *Oriana*, of birth and station, resolves to annoy him, if not to subdue his heart; and, as she passes along the street, she makes a storm the pretext to seek a shelter under his roof.

" *Enter Servant.*

" *Serv.* My lord, the count's sister being overtaken in the streets with a great hail-storm, is lit at your gate, and desires room till the storm be overpast.

" *Gond.* Is she a woman?

" *Serv.* Ay, my lord, I think so.

" *Gond.* I have none for her then; bid her get her gone; tell her she is not welcome!

" *Serv.* My lord, she is now coming up.

" *Gond.* She shall not come up! tell her any thing; tell her I have but one great room in my house, and I am now in it.

" *Serv.* She's here, my lord.

" *Gond.* Oh, impudence of women! I can keep dogs out of my house, or I can defend my house against thieves; but I cannot keep out women.—Now, madam;

" *Enter* ORIANA, *a Waiting-woman and a Page.*

What hath your ladyship to say to me?

" *Ori.* My lord, I was bold to crave the help of your house against the storm.

" *Gond.* Your ladyship's boldness in coming will be impudence in staying; for you are most unwelcome.

"*Ori.* Oh, my lord!

"*Gond.* Do you laugh? by the hate I bear to you 'tis true!

"*Ori.* You are merry, my lord.

"*Gond.* Let me laugh to death if I be, or can be, whilst thou art here, or livest, or any of thy sex!

"*Ori.* I commend your lordship

"*Gond* Do you commend me? why do you commend me? I give you no such cause: Thou art a filthy, impudent ——; a woman, a very woman!

"*Ori.* Ha, ha, ha!
Your lordship hath a good wit.

"*Gond.* How? what? have I good wit?

"*Ori.* Come, my lord; I have heard before of your lordship's merry vein in jesting against our sex; which I being desirous to hear, made me rather chuse your lordship's house than any other; but I know I am welcome.

"*Gond.* Let me not live, if you be! Methinks it doth not become you to come to my house, being a stranger to you: I have no woman in my house to entertain you, nor to shew you your chamber, why should you come to me? I have no galleries nor banqueting-houses, nor . . . to shew your ladyship.

"*Ori.* Believe me, this your lordship's plainness makes me think myself more welcome than if you had sworn, by all the pretty court-oaths that are, I had been welcomer than your soul to your body.

"*Gond.* Now she's in, talking treason will [not] get her out; I durst sooner undertake to talk an intelligencer out of the room, and speak more than he durst hear, than talk a woman out of my company."

While conversing, the duke of Milan, who is in love with Oriana, arrives, and is much surprised to find them together,—the one being so much noted for virtue, the other for aversion to her sex. Her brother, too, is among the attendants, and his surprise is at least equal to the duke's. Whatever be her chastity, she lacks the appearance of it; and she so far braves outward decency as to remain with Gondarino after the departure of the rest. The banter on her part and the railing on his are renewed:

"*Gond.* Oh my ears!—Why, madam, will not you follow your brother? You are waited for by great men; he'll bring you to 'em.

" *Ori.* I am very well, my lord; you do mistake me, if you think I affect greater company than yourself.

" *Gond.* What madness possesseth thee, that thou canst imagine me a fit man to entertain ladies? I tell thee, I do use to tear their hair, to kick them, and to twinge their noses, if they be not careful in avoiding me.

" *Ori.* Your lordship may descant upon your own behaviour as please you, but I protest, so sweet and courtly it appears in my eye, that I mean not to leave you yet.

" *Gond.* I shall grow rough.

" *Ori.* A rough carriage is best in a man.—I 'll dine with you, my lord.

" *Gond.* Why, I will starve thee; thou shalt have nothing.

" *Ori.* I have heard of your lordship's nothing; I 'll put that to the venture.

" *Gond.* Well, thou shalt have meat; I 'll send it to thee.

" *Ori.* I 'll keep no state, my lord; neither do I mourn; I 'll dine with you.

" *Gond.* Is such a thing as this allow'd to live?
What power hath let thee loose upon the earth,
To plague us for our sins? Out of my doors!

" *Ori.* I would your lordship did but see how well
This fury doth become you! it doth shew
So near the life, as it were natural.

" *Gond.* Oh, thou damn'd woman! I will fly the vengeance
That hangs above thee: Follow, if thou darest!

[*Exit* GONDARINO.

" *Ori.* I must not leave this fellow; I will torment him to madness!
To teach his passions 'gainst kind to move,
The more he hates, the more I 'll seem to love.

[*Exeunt* ORIANA, *Maid and Page.*"

This levity on the lady's part has its effect: when the duke calls a second time, he is assured by the general that she is the mistress of the latter. Her fame is thus blasted; she is even told that it is so; and she now desires Gondarino to speak the truth and restore her to reputation. He promises to do so; professess great sorrow for his wanton aspersion of her character, and even admiration for her. In the mean time he persuades her to retire for a while, until he undeceives the duke: but he has a deeper project in view,— to plunge her into infamy beyond the reach of pardon by the world. It might naturally be sup-

posed that she would return to her own house, until the explanation were made: but, with a folly that defies the power of estimation, she allows herself to go where he appoints, and is conducted to a house of ill-fame, and shut in a private apartment. Gondarino now hastens to the duke and her brother, and tells them that the lady has so far lost all shame as to take up her abode in a brothel, where he is in the habit of visiting her; and in proof of his assertion invites them to accompany him to the house. They go, and she appears at the window. The proof seems complete enough; but on the lady recognising her brother, she intreats him to help her. Gondarino asserts that this is all a farce; that to save appearances only she wishes for protection. To ascertain whether she be really innocent the duke and her brother agree that a last trial shall be made. If she be really guilty, she will not hesitate to commit one sin more to save her life; and a certain Arrigo is told to try her, the duke and her brother Valore remaining hidden to view and hear all that passes.

"*Enter* ARRIGO *and* ORIANA *below; Duke*, VALORE, *and* GONDARINO *above*.

"*Ori.* Sir, what may be the current of your business,
That thus you single out your time and place?
"*Arr.* Madam, the business now imposed upon me
Concerns you nearly;
I wish some worser man might finish it.
"*Ori.* Why are you changed so? are you not well, sir?
"*Arr.* Yes, madam, I am well: 'Would you were so!
"*Ori.* Why, sir, I feel myself in perfect health.
"*Arr.* And yet you cannot live long, madam.
"*Ori.* Why, good Arrigo?
"*Arr.* Why, you must die.
"*Ori.* I know I must;
But yet my fate calls not upon me.
"*Arr.* It does;
This hand the duke commands shall give you death.
"*Ori.* Heaven, and the powers divine, guard well the innocent!
"*Arr.* Lady, your prayers may do your soul some good,

But sure your body cannot merit by 'em :
You must prepare to die.
"*Ori.* What's my offence? What have these years committed,
That may be dangerous to the duke or state?
Have I conspired by poison? have I given up
My honour to some loose unsettled blood,
That may give action to my plots? dear sir,
Let me not die ignorant of my faults!
"*Arr.* You shall not :
Then, lady, you must know, you are held unhonest :
The duke, your brother, and your friends in court,
With too much grief condemn you ; though to me,
The fault deserves not to be paid with death.
"*Ori.* Who's my accuser?
"*Arr.* Lord Gondarino.
"*Ori.* Arrigo, take these words, and bear them to the duke ;
It is the last petition I shall ask thee ·
Tell him, the child this present hour brought forth
To see the world has not a soul more pure,
More white, more virgin, than I have ; tell him,
Lord Gondarino's plot I suffer for,
And willingly ; tell him, it had been
A greater honour to have saved than kill'd :
But I have done : strike ! I am arm'd for Heaven.
Why stay you? is there any hope?
"*Arr.* I would not strike.
"*Ori.* Have you the power to save?
"*Arr.* With hazard of my life, if it should be known.
"*Ori.* You will not venture that?
"*Arr* I will : I [illegible]
There is that means yet to escape your death,
If you can wisely apprehend it.
"*Ori.* You dare not be so kind?
"*Arr.* I dare, and will, if you dare but deserve it.
"*Ori.* If I should slight my life, I were to blame.
"*Arr.* Then, madam,
This is the means, or else you die : I love you.
"*Ori.* I shall believe it if you save my life.
"*Arr.* And you must lie with me.
"*Ori.* I dare not buy my life so.
"*Arr.* Come, you must resolve ; say *yea* or *no.*
"*Ori.* Then *no!* Nay, look not ruggedly upon me ;
I am made up too strong to fear such looks :
Come, do your butcher's part! before
I would wish life, with the dear loss of honour,
I dare find means to free myself.

"*Arr.* Speak, will you yield?
"*Ori.* Villain, I will not! Murderer do the worst
Thy base unnoble thoughts dare prompt thee to!
I am above thee, slave!
"*Arr.* Wilt thou not be drawn
To yield by fair persuasions?
"*Ori.* No; nor by——
"*Arr.* Peace! know your doom then: your ladyship must remember
You are not now at home, where you dare feast
All that come about you; but you are fallen
Under my mercy, which shall be but small,
If thou refuse to yield: hear what I have sworn
Unto myself; I will enjoy thee, though it be
Between the parting of thy soul and body;
Yield yet, and live!
"*Ori.* I'll guard the one; let Heaven guard the other!
"*Arr.* Are you so resolute then?
"*Duke.* [*From above.*] Hold, hold, I say!
"*Ori.* What, yet more terror to my tragedy?
"*Arr.* Lady, the scene of blood is done;
You are now as free from scandal as from death."

Of course her fame is cleared; Oriana becomes the affianced bride of the duke; and Gondarino is proved to be a base traducer. His punishment is left to the lady, who chooses an odd one. She migh banish him for ever; but she prefers tying him to a chair, and inviting a host of ladies to teaze and kiss him,—an infliction which, as we are gravely informed, is more severe than banishment, or even death.

Such is the main plot; but there are two underplots to relieve the other. They are, however, not subsidiary: they have no natural connection with the piece; and they are disgustingly obscene. The great fault of Fletcher was the complicated character of his incidents: he lost sight of the main action in a multitude of divergent ones; he heaped incident on incident so as to destroy all pretension to unity, and consequently to interest. In this respect Beaumont was a real acquisition to him: if *he* had more invention, the other had more judgment. There is, however, less of invention in *The Woman-Hater* than has been generally

supposed. One of the incidents,—the most prominent one, indeed, though as it has no immediate connection with the main plot, we have not dwelt on it—is taken from Bayle's Dictionary, who relates it from Paulus Jovius. The conduct of the heroine is in the highest degree unnatural; the sentiments are outrageous; and the decencies of life, no less than nature, are violated.

"*Philaster; or, Love Lies A-bleeding,*" the first of these joint productions of Beaumont and Fletcher, has been highly prized. It was, many years after the death of both authors, popular on the stage; and it has since been frequently revived. By modern writers it has been called "one of the most beautiful dramatic works which this country has produced." That the reader may judge how far this praise is merited, we will briefly analyze the piece.

The *scene* is confined to Messina and the neighbouring forest; at the duration of the action we may guess; but it cannot be more than a few hours. Both our authors were admirers of the unities (in imitation, no doubt, of Ben Jonson); and though they frequently transgress that of *action*, they generally observe those of time and place. The king of Sicily has a daughter, *Arethusa*, for whom he has provided a bridegroom in *Pharamond*, prince of Spain. As she is his only daughter and heiress, he is anxious for the celebration of the marriage. But he has another reason for anxiety: there is a prince, *Philaster*, who is the rightful heir to the Sicilian crown, whom the whole people love, and whom he has vainly endeavoured to remove. It might naturally be expected that to consolidate his power, and to continue it in his own family, he would give his daughter to *Philaster*. But in our old dramatists nature or reason must not be looked for: they were too obvious to make any impression on either writers or readers; and the artificial, the unnatural, the unreasonable was preferred. Arethusa has no liking for the prince Pharamond; but she has conceived

a passion for Philaster. This she resolves to tell him and she sends for him: —

Enter PHILASTER.

" *Lady.* Here is my lord Philaster.
" *Are.* Oh! 't is well.
Withdraw yourself. [*Exit Lady.*
" *Phi.* Madam, your messenger
Made me believe you wish'd to speak with me.
" *Are.* 'T is true, Philaster; but the words are such
I have to say, and do so ill beseem
The mouth of woman, that I wish them said,
And yet am loth to speak them. Have you known,
That I have aught detracted from your worth?
Have I in person wrong'd you? Or have set
My baser instruments to throw disgrace
Upon your virtues?
" *Phi.* Never, madam, you.
" *Are.* Why, then, should you, in such a public place,
Injure a princess, and a scandal lay
Upon my fortunes, famed to be so great;
Calling a great part of my dowry in question?
" *Phi.* Madam, this truth which I shall speak, will be
Foolish: But, for your fair and virtuous self,
I could afford myself to have no right
To any thing you wish'd.
" *Are.* Philaster, know,
I must enjoy these kingdoms.
" *Phi.* Madam! Both?
" *Are.* Both, or I die: By fate, I die, Philaster,
If I not calmly may enjoy them both.
" *Phi.* I would do much to save that noble life;
Yet would be loth to have posterity
Find in our stories, that Philaster gave
His right unto a sceptre, and a crown,
To save a lady's longing.
" *Are.* Nay then, hear!
I must and will have them, and more——
" *Phi.* What more?
" *Are.* Or lose that little life the gods prepared,
To trouble this poor piece of earth withal.
" *Phi.* Madam, what more?
" *Are.* Turn, then, away thy face.
" *Phi.* No.
" *Are.* Do.
" *Phi.* I cannot endure it. Turn away my face?
I never yet saw enemy that look'd

So dreadfully, but that I thought myself
As great a basilisk as he; or spake
So horrible, but that I thought my tongue
Bore thunder underneath, as much as his;
Nor beast that I could turn from: Shall I then
Begin to fear sweet sounds? a lady's voice,
Whom I do love? Say, you would have my life;
Why, I will give it you; for 't is of me
A thing so loath'd, and unto you that ask
Of so poor use, that I shall make no price:
If you entreat, I will unmov'dly hear.
" *Are.* Yet, for my sake, a little bend thy looks.
" *Phi.* I do.
" *Are.* Then know, I must have them, and thee.
" *Phi.* And me?
" *Are.* Thy love; without which, all the land
Discover'd yet, will serve me for no use,
But to be buried in.
" *Phi.* Is 't possible?
" *Are.* With it, it were too little to bestow
On thee. Now, though thy breath do strike me dead,
(Which, know, it may) I have unript my breast.
" *Phi.* Madam, you are too full of noble thoughts,
To lay a train for this contemned life,
Which you may have for asking: To suspect
Were base, where I deserve no ill. Love you
By all my hopes, I do, above my life:
But how this passion should proceed from you
So violently, would amaze a man
That would be jealous.
" *Are.* Another soul, into my body shot,
Could not have fill'd me with more strength and spirit,
Than this thy breath. But spend not hasty time,
In seeking how I came thus: 'T is the gods,
The gods, that make me so; and, sure, our love
Will be the nobler, and the better blest,
In that the secret justice of the gods
Is mingled with it. Let us leave, and kiss;
Lest some unwelcome guest should fall betwixt us,
And we should part without it.
" *Phi.* 'T will be ill
I should abide here long.
" *Are.* 'T is true; and worse
You should come often. How shall we devise
To hold intelligence, that our true loves,
On any new occasion, may agree
What path is best to tread?

"*Phi.* I have a boy,
Sent by the gods, I hope, to this intent,
Not yet seen in the court. Hunting the buck,
I found him sitting by a fountain's side,
Of which he borrow'd some to quench his thirst,
And paid the nymph again as much in tears.
A garland lay him by, made by himself,
Of many several flowers, bred in the bay,
Stuck in that mystic order, that the rareness
Delighted me: But ever when he turn'd
His tender eyes upon 'em, he would weep,
As if he meant to make 'em grow again.
Seeing such pretty helpless innocence
Dwell in his face, I ask'd him all his story.
He told me, that his parents gentle died,
Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,
Which gave him roots; and of the crystal springs,
Which did not stop their courses, and the sun,
Which still, he thank'd him, yielded him his light.
Then took he up his garland, and did shew
What every flower, as country people hold,
Did signify; and how all, order'd thus,
Express'd his grief: And, to my thoughts, did read
The prettiest lecture of his country art
That could be wish'd: so that, methought, I could
Have studied it. I gladly entertain'd him,
Who was [as] glad to follow; and have got
The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy,
That ever master kept. Him will I send
To wait on you, and bear our hidden love."

After this meeting, Pharamond, who is come to receive his promised bride, has the less hope of success. *Bellario,* the page of Philaster, leaves him with great reluctance for the society of Arethusa; and there is a motive for this reluctance: it is not a boy; it is *Euphrasia,* daughter of Dion, a Sicilian noble, whom love has caused to assume the male attire, and enter the service of Philaster. She endeavours, but in vain, to remain with him:

"*Enter* PHILASTER *and* BELLARIO.

"*Phi.* And thou shalt find her honourable, boy;
Full of regard unto thy tender youth,
For thine own modesty; and, for my sake,
Apter to give than thou wilt be to ask,
Ay, or deserve.

"*Bel.* Sir, you did take me up when I was nothing;
And only yet am something, by being yours.
You trusted me unknown; and that which you were apt
To construe a simple innocence in me,
Perhaps, might have been craft; the cunning of a boy
Harden'd in lies and theft: Yet ventured you
To part my miseries and me; for which,
I never can expect to serve a lady
That bears more honour in her breast than you.

"*Phi.* But, boy, it will prefer thee. Thou art young,
And bear'st a childish overflowing love
To them that clap thy cheeks, and speak thee fair yet.
But when thy judgment comes to rule those passions,
Thou wilt remember best those careful friends,
That placed thee in the noblest way of life.
She is a princess I prefer thee to.

"*Bel.* In that small time that I have seen the world,
I never knew a man hasty to part
With a servant he thought trusty. I remember,
My father would prefer the boys he kept
To greater men than he; but did it not
Till they were grown too saucy for himself.

"*Phi.* Why, gentle boy, I find no fault at all
In thy behaviour.

"*Bel.* Sir, if I have made
A fault of ignorance, instruct my youth:
I shall be willing, if not apt, to learn;
Age and experience will adorn my mind
With larger knowledge: and if I have done
A wilful fault, think me not past all hope,
For once. What master holds so strict a hand
Over his boy, that he will part with him
Without one warning? Let me be corrected,
To break my stubbornness, if it be so,
Rather than turn me off; and I shall mend.

"*Phi.* Thy love doth plead so prettily to stay,
That, trust me, I could weep to part with thee.
Alas! I do not turn thee off; thou know'st
It is my business that doth call thee hence;
And, when thou art with her, thou dwell'st with me.
Think so, and 't is so. And when time is full,
That thou hast well discharged this heavy trust,
Laid on so weak a one, I will again
With joy receive thee; as I live, I will.
Nay, weep not, gentle boy! 'T is more than time
Thou didst attend the princess.

"*Bel.* I am gone.

But since I am to part with you, my lord,
And none knows whether I shall live to do
More service for you, take this little prayer:
Heaven bless your loves, your fights, all your designs!
May sick men, if they have your wish, be well;
And heaven hate those you curse, though I be one!
[*Exit.*

" *Phi.* The love of boys unto their lords is strange;
I have read wonders of it: Yet this boy,
For my sake (if a man may judge by looks
And speech) would out-do story. I may see
A day to pay him for his loyalty.
[*Exit* PHILASTER."

There is more nature in one of the dialogues between Arethusa and Bellario: —

" *Enter* BELLARIO.

" *Are.* Sir, you are sad to change your service; is 't not so.
" *Bel.* Madam, I have not changed; I wait on you,
To do him service.
" *Are.* Thou disclaim'st in me.
Tell me thy name.
" *Bel.* Bellario.
" *Are.* Thou can'st sing, and play?
" *Bel.* If grief will give me leave, madam, I can
" *Are.* Alas! what kind of grief can thy years know?
Hadst thou a curst master when thou went'st to school?
Thou art not capable of other grief.
Thy brows and cheeks are smooth as waters be,
When no breath troubles them: Believe me, boy,
Care seeks out wrinkled brows and hollow eyes,
And builds himself caves, to abide in them.
Come, sir, tell me truly, does your lord love me?
" *Bel.* Love, madam? I know not what it is.
" *Are.* Canst thou know grief, and never yet knew'st love?
Thou art deceived, boy. Does he speak of me,
As if he wish'd me well?
" *Bel.* If it be love,
To forget all respect of his own friends,
In thinking of your face; if it be love,
To sit cross-arm'd, and sigh away the day,
Mingled with starts, crying your name as loud
And hastily as men i' the streets do fire;
If it be love to weep himself away,
When he but hears of any lady dead,
Or kill'd, because it might have been your chance;

If, when he goes to rest (which will not be)
'Twixt every prayer he says, to name you once,
As others drop a bead, — be to be in love,
Then, madam, I dare swear he loves you.
"*Are.* Oh you 're a cunning boy, and taught to lie,
For your lord's credit: but thou know'st a lie,
That bears this sound, is welcomer to me
Than any truth, that says he loves me not.
Lead the way, boy.—Do you attend me too.—
'T is thy lord's business hastes me thus. Away. [*Exeunt.*"

The object of Arethusa is to break the projected match between her and Pharamond. Fortunately for her views, she hears of his having in his bedroom a lady of frail virtue, and she tells the king that she cannot marry one so unworthy of her. The king hastens to the spot, calls on Pharamond, who refuses to open the door, until force is employed. The lady is discovered; but she braves the king and his menaces. She does more: she tells him that his own daughter is worse than she; that the princess has in her service a fair youth, and that if *her* character be injured, the princess shall not escape. The king is in consternation; the report spreads on every side; all Sicily begins to despise Arethusa, and to bewail the blindness of Philaster. At length he is told of her infamy: he disbelieves it for some time, — stamps, raves, threatens the whole world, and believes the calumny. In his agony, he taxes Bellario with the guilty intercourse between them, and is confounded by the calm demeanor of the youth, whose protestations have every semblance of innocence. But he is forbidden the sight of his master, to whom he bids a final adieu. Philaster hastens to Arethusa: he finds her in tears,—for the king her father has just left her, after upbraiding her. The scene is natural: —

"*Enter* PHILASTER.

"*Phi.* Peace to your fairest thoughts, dearest mistress.
"*Are.* Oh, my dearest servant, I have a war within me.
"*Phi.* He must be more than man, that makes these crystals

Run into rivers. Sweetest fair, the cause?
And, as I am your slave, tied to your goodness,
Your creature, made again, from what I was,
And newly-spirited, I 'll right your honour.
" *Are.* Oh, my best love, that boy!
" *Phi.* What boy?
" *Are.* The pretty boy you gave me——
" *Phi.* What of him?
" *Are.* Must be no more mine.
" *Phi.* Why?
" *Are.* They are jealous of him.
" *Phi.* Jealous! who?
" *Are.* The king.
" *Phi.* Oh, my fortune!
Then 't is no idle jealousy. [*Aside.*] — Let him go.
" *Are.* Oh, cruel!
Are you hard-hearted too? who shall now tell you,
How much I loved you? who shall swear it to you?
And weep the tears I send? who shall now bring you
Letters, rings, bracelets? lose his health in service?
Wake tedious nights in stories of your praise?
Who shall sing your crying elegies?
And strike a sad soul into senseless pictures,
And make them mourn? who shall take up his lute,
And touch it, till he crown a silent sleep
Upon my eye-lid, making me dream, and cry,
'Oh, my dear, dear Philaster!'
" *Phi.* Oh, my heart!
Would he had broken thee, that made thee know
This lady was not loyal.— Mistress, forget
The boy: I'll get thee a far better.
" *Are.* Oh, never, never such a boy again,
As my Bellario!
" *Phi.* 'T is but your fond affection.
" *Are.* With thee, my boy, farewell for ever
All secrecy in servants! Farewell faith!
And all desire to do well for itself!
Let all that shall succeed thee, for thy wrongs,
Sell and betray chaste love!
" *Phi.* And all this passion for a boy?
" *Are.* He was your boy, and you put him to me,
And the loss of such must have a mourning for.
" *Phi.* Oh, thou forgetful woman!
" *Are.* How, my lord?
" *Phi.* False Arethusa!
Hast thou a medicine to restore my wits,

When I have lost 'em? If not, leave to talk,
And do thus.
"*Are.* Do what, sir? Would you sleep?
"*Phi.* For ever, Arethusa. Oh, ye gods,
Give me a worthy patience! Have I stood
Naked, alone, the shock of many fortunes?
Have I seen mischiefs numberless, and mighty,
Grow like a sea upon me? Have I taken
Danger as stern as death into my bosom,
And laugh'd upon it, made it but a mirth,
And flung it by? Do I live now like him,
Under this tyrant king, that languishing
Hears his sad bell, and sees his mourners? Do I
Bear all this bravely, and must sink at length
Under a woman's falsehood? Oh, that boy,
That cursed boy! None but a villain boy
To ease your lust?
"*Are.* Nay, then I am betray'd:
I feel the plot cast for my overthrow.
Oh, I am wretched!
"*Phi.* Now you may take that little right I have
To this poor kingdom: give it to your joy;
For I have no joy in it. Some far place,
Where never womankind durst set her foot,
For bursting with her poisons, must I seek,
And live to curse you.
There dig a cave, and preach to birds and beasts,
What woman is, and help to save them from you.
How Heaven is in your eyes, but, in your hearts,
More hell than hell has. How your tongues, like scorpions,
Both heal and poison. How your thoughts are woven
With thousand changes in one subtle web,
And worn so by you. How that foolish man
That reads the story of a woman's face,
And dies believing it, is lost for ever:
How all the good you have is but a shadow,
I' th' morning with you, and at night behind you,
Past and forgotten: How your vows are frosts,
Fast for a night, and with the next sun gone:
How you are, being taken all together,
A mere confusion, and so dead a chaos,
That love cannot distinguish. These sad texts,
Till my last hour, I am bound to utter of you.
So, farewell all my woe, all my delight! [*Exit* PHILASTER.
"*Are.* Be merciful, ye gods, and strike me dead!
What way have I deserved this? Make my breast

Transparent as pure crystal, that the world,
Jealous of me, may see the foulest thought
My heart holds. Where shall a woman turn her eyes,
To find out constancy ?"

Nor is there less vigour, or less justice, in the following, where Bellario comes to take his leave of her: —

"*Enter* BELLARIO.

"*Are.* See me, how black
And guiltily, methinks, that boy looks now! —
Oh, thou dissembler, that, before thou spak'st,
Wert in thy cradle false, sent to make lyes,
And betray innocents! Thy lord and thou
May glory in the ashes of a maid
Fool'd by her passion; but the conquest is
Nothing so great as wicked. Fly away!
Let my command force thee to that, which shame
Would do without it. If thou understood'st
The loathed office thou hast undergone,
Why, thou wouldst hide thee under heaps of hills,
Lest men should dig and find thee.
"*Bel.* Oh, what god,
Angry with men, hath sent this strange disease
Into the noblest minds? Madam, this grief
You add unto me is no more than drops
To seas, for which they are not seen to swell
My lord hath struck his anger through my heart,
And let out all the hope of future joys.
You need not bid me fly; I came to part,
To take my latest leave. Farewell for ever!
I durst not run away, in honesty,
From such a lady, like a boy that stole,
Or made some grievous fault. The power of gods
Assist you in your sufferings! Hasty time
Reveal the truth to your abused lord
And mine, that he may know your worth; whilst I
Go seek out some forgotten place to die! [*Exit* BELLARIO.
"*Are.* Peace guide thee! Thou hast overthrown me once;
Yet, if I had another Troy to lose,
Thou, or another villain, with thy looks,
Might talk me out of it, and send me naked,
My hair dishevell'd, through the fiery streets."

It might be supposed that she would end the despair

of all by revealing her sex: but this would be too obvious and too natural a course for our old dramatists, who, in their plots, and generally in their characters, disregarded such considerations.

But we must hasten towards the catastrophe. There is a royal hunt, and all the princesses are of the party. Philaster wanders into the forest, and deplores his lot:—

"*Phi.* Oh, that I had been nourish'd in these woods,
With milk of goats, and acorns, and not known
The right of crowns, nor the dissembling trains
Of women's looks; but digg'd myself a cave,
Where I, my fire, my cattle, and my bed,
Might have been shut together in one shed;
And then had taken me some mountain girl,
Beaten with winds, chaste as the harden'd rocks
Whereon she dwells; that might have strew'd my bed
With leaves, and reeds, and with the skins of beasts,
Our neighbours; and have borne at her big breasts
My large coarse issue! This had been a life
Free from vexation."

In the wood he is accosted by Bellario, who entreats him for some little food and clothing to preserve life. He repulses the youth savagely, who retreats from him. In the mean time Arethusa has disappeared from the party, and the distracted monarch sends on every side in search of her. The whole forest is ransacked; and during the search Bellario finds the princess fainting. He bends over her—tries to restore her—and in this act is discovered by Philaster, who is more than ever convinced of her guilt. He furiously upbraids both; Bellario again flees; while the prince begs to be deprived of life by the hands of his idol. She, too, begs the same favour at his; and in a paroxysm of rage, not knowing what he does, he draws his sword and wounds her; a countryman arrives—fights him, and wounds him too. Hearing the royal party approach, he retreats, finds Bellario asleep, whom he slightly pierces in the breast, hoping thereby that the track of blood will be diverted from him. He can, however, proceed no

further, and, at Bellario's desire, he creeps into a bush to hide himself. Bellario is discovered; is taxed with the attempted assassination of the princess; and, to save Philaster, acknowledges the crime. Philaster is now convinced that Bellario is innocent: such self-devotion is inconsistent with the least portion of guilt; he emerges from his hiding place, and declares himself the criminal. A contest of generosity now follows, each being eager to suffer for the other; but, as the king is anxious to fix the crime on Philaster, *he* is preferred. There was, indeed, some reason why he should wish to remove Arethusa (his love for her was unknown to the king and the whole court) as she was the only obstacle between himself and the throne. She, as the injured one,—one that has the most right to punish,—begs the custody both of Philaster and Bellario, and her request is granted. This imprisonment, we may be sure, is not very severe. He is at length called out to his death, the king and the courtiers waiting to see the deed.

"*Enter* PHILASTER, ARETHUSA, *and* BELLARIO *in a robe and garland.*

"*King.* How now! what masque is this?
"*Bel.* Right royal sir, I should
Sing you an epithalamium of these lovers,
But, having lost my best airs with my fortunes,
And wanting a celestial harp to strike
This blessed union on, thus in glad story
I give you all. These two fair cedar branches,
The noblest of the mountain, where they grew
Straitest and tallest, under whose still shades
The worthier beasts have made their layers, and slept
Free from the Sirian star, and the fell thunder-stroke
Free from the clouds,
When they were big with humour, and deliver'd,
In thousand spouts, their issues to the earth:
Oh, there was none but silent quiet there!
Till never-pleased Fortune shot up shrubs,
Base under-brambles, to divorce these branches;
And for a while they did so; and did reign
Over the mountain, and choak up his beauty
With brakes, rude thorns, and thistles, till the sun
Scorch'd them, even to the roots, and dried them there:

And now a gentle gale hath blown again,
That made these branches meet, and twine together,
Never to be divided. The god, that sings
His holy numbers over marriage-beds,
Hath knit their noble hearts, and here they stand
Your children, mighty king; and I have done."
"*King*. How, how?
"*Are*. Sir, if you love it in plain truth,
(For now there is no masquing in't) this gentleman,
The prisoner that you gave me, is become
My keeper, and through all the bitter throes
Your jealousies and his ill fate have wrought him,
Thus nobly hath he struggled, and at length
Arrived here my dear husband.
"*King*. Your dear husband!
Call in the captain of the citadel;
There you shall keep your wedding. I'll provide
A masque shall make your Hymen turn his saffron
Into a sullen coat, and sing sad requiems
To your departing souls: Blood shall put out
Your torches; and, instead of gaudy flowers
About your wanton necks, an axe shall hang
Like a prodigious meteor,
Ready to crop your lovers' sweets. Hear, ye gods!
From this time do I shake all title off
Of father to this woman, this base woman;
And what there is of vengeance, in a lion
Cast among dogs, or robbed of his dear young,
The same, enforced more terrible, more mighty,
Expect from me!
"*Are*. Sir, by that little life I have left to swear by,
There's nothing that can stir me from myself.
What I have done, I have done without repentance;
For death can be no bugbear unto me,
So long as Pharamond is not my headsman.
"*Dion*. Sweet peace upon thy soul, thou worthy maid,
Whene'er thou diest! For this time I'll excuse thee,
Or be thy prologue.
"*Phi*. Sir, let me speak next;
And let my dying words be better with you
Than my dull living actions. If you aim
At the dear life of this sweet innocent,
You are a tyrant and a savage monster;
Your memory shall be as foul behind you,
As you are, living; all your better deeds
Shall be in water writ, but this in marble;

No chronicle shall speak you, though your own,
But for the shame of men. No monument
(Though high and big as Pelion) shall be able
To cover this base murder: Make it rich
With brass, with purest gold, and shining jasper,
Like the Pyramides; lay on epitaphs,
Such as make great men gods; my little marble
(That only clothes my ashes, not my faults)
Shall far out-shine it. And, for after issues,
Think not so madly of the heavenly wisdoms,
That they will give you more for your mad rage
To cut off, unless it be some snake, or something like
Yourself, that in his birth shall strangle you.
Remember my father, king! There was a fault,
But I forgive it. Let that sin persuade you
To love this lady: If you have a soul,
Think, save her, and be saved. For myself,
I have so long expected this glad hour,
So languish'd under you, and daily wither'd,
That, Heaven knows, it is a joy to die:
I find a recreation in 't."

While this scene is passing, the citizens of Messina are coming for the liberation of Philaster. He alone can allay the tumult. He is released, and besought by the king to forgive what is past; which he does on the condition that Arethusa and Bellario be pardoned too. But in the midst of the rejoicing which follows the assuaging of the civil tempest, and that greater joy which attends the junction of Arethusa's hand with Philaster's by the king himself, calumny again loads Arethusa with disgrace, on account of her familiarity with Bellario. Philaster is no longer moved by it; but the king is so incensed as to order Bellario to be tortured. Bellario is found to be a woman, the daughter of Dion the courtier. All is now unbounded joy; but there is much surprise, even in Philaster, at the obstinacy with which Bellario, or Euphrasia, concealed her sex:—

"*Phi.* But, Bellario,
(For I must call thee still so) tell me why
Thou didst conceal thy sex? It was a fault;
A fault, Bellario, though thy other deeds

Of truth outweigh'd it: All these jealousies
Had flown to nothing, if thou hadst discover'd
What now we know.
  " *Bel.* My father oft would speak
Your worth and virtue; and, as I did grow
More and more apprehensive, I did thirst
To see the man so praised; but yet all this
Was but a maiden longing, to be lost
As soon as found; till sitting in my window,
Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
I thought, (but it was you) enter our gates.
My blood flew out, and back again as fast,
As I had puff'd it forth and suck'd it in
Like breath: Then was I call'd away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man,
Heaved from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, raised
So high in thoughts as I: You left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you for ever. I did hear you talk
Far above singing! After you were gone,
I grew acquainted with my heart, and search'd
What stirr'd it so: Alas! I found it love;
Yet far from lust; for could I but have lived
In presence of you, I had had my end.
For this I did delude my noble father
With a feign'd pilgrimage, and dress'd myself
In habit of a boy; and, for I knew
My birth no match for you, I was past hope
Of having you; and understanding well,
That when I made discovery of my sex,
I could not stay with you, I made a vow,
By all the most religious things a maid
Could call together, never to be known,
Whilst there was hope to hide me from men's eyes,
For other than I seem'd, that I might ever
Abide with you: Then sat I by the fount,
Where first you took me up."

Finally, she resolves to reside with Philaster and the princess during the rest of her days,—an arrangement to which Arethusa somewhat strangely consents.

Such is the drama of *Philaster*. Its chief attraction was held to be Euphrasia. "The character of Bellario," says a modern critic, "must have been extremely popular in its day. For many years after the date of

Philaster's first exhibition on the stage, scarce a play can be found without one of these women-pages in it, following in the train of some pre-engaged lover, calling on the gods to bless her happy rival (his mistress), whom, no doubt, she curses in her heart; giving rise to many pretty *equivoques*, by the way; and either made happy at last by some surprising turn of fate, or dismissed with the joint pity of the lovers and the audience. Our ancestors seem to have been wonderfully delighted with these transformations of sex. Women's parts were then acted by young men. What an odd thing it must have been to see a boy play a woman, and a woman play a man!" Whatever might be the attraction of such transformations of sex in the time of Beaumont and Fletcher, and immediately afterwards, it soon became too hacknied to have any charm. In the first instance, it was probably derived from the *Diana of Montemayer*. Shakespear adopted it in his *Twelfth Night*,— probably from the success of this drama of *Philaster*. We do not, however, agree in the praise bestowed on this character. Delicacy she has — a wonderful delicacy, considering the times — and there is vigour no less than poetry in some of her speeches. But she acts without a motive: her disguise is uncalled for by the circumstances; and it destroys the only chance she could ever have had of obtaining the notice of Philaster. Had she remained, *in propriâ persona*, in her father's house; had the prince alone, what might easily have been effected, visited the house; love for her might have prevented that which he felt for Arethusa. She is evidently the more interesting character of the two; and where no prior attachment existed, she might have been preferred. The disguise, therefore, was a gross error of judgment. Philaster himself has little claim to our admiration. We pity him, because of his dependent, even perilous, situation; we wish for the restoration of his rights; but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that he is the creature of im-

pulse, that he frequently acts without a motive, that he shows often weakness, sometimes pusillanimity, but never the moderation becoming a prince, especially a prince who has been schooled by adversity. The whole of the forest scene is unworthy of the genius that created the rest of the piece. The jealousy of Philaster has been gravely compared with that of Othello! On such a comparison not one word need be wasted; nor on the equally felicitous one between Philaster and Hamlet! On the whole, though we deem this a very respectable performance, we cannot raise it so high as our predecessors have done.

The pens of our authors were sufficiently prolific. From 1608, the probable date of *Philaster*, to 1616, they produced, either in conjunction or separately (for Beaumont composed two, and Fletcher four, without the assistance of his friend), no fewer than twenty-four plays. The genius of Fletcher, however, was more prolific than that of Beaumont. After the death of the latter, *he*, within ten years, composed, we are told, above twenty without the aid of any other dramatist, and about ten in conjunction with others. Such rapidity of composition may well account for the mediocrity of many. Probably it was more rapid than either of our poets, and especially Fletcher, wished. We learn that he was often teased by the actors for the completion of his dramas; and to this urgency he sacrificed, in some degree, his reputation during life, and his fame after death.

Another of the dramas for which our authors were most celebrated, was *The Maid's Tragedy*. The year of its appearance cannot be ascertained; nor do we know whether it was prior or subsequent to *Philaster*. It was printed, indeed, in 1619; but this is no criterion; as an interval of many years frequently, perhaps generally, took place between the exhibition and the publication. There is, however, reason to infer that it was acted before 1611, the year when the *Second Maid's*

Tragedy was performed, which must have had a predecessor, — probably the one before us. — In this play, *Amintor*, a noble, is betrothed to *Aspatia*, his equal in rank. The king, however, persuades Amintor to forsake her, and marry *Evadne*, the sister of his brave general *Melantius*. The sorrow of Aspatia at her desertion is thus described: —

"*Lys.* Yes. But this lady
Walks discontented, with her watery eyes
Bent on the earth. The unfrequented woods
Are her delight; and when she sees a bank
Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell
Her servants what a pretty place it were
To bury lovers in; and make her maids
Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.
She carries with her an infectious grief,
That strikes all her beholders; she will sing
The mournful'st things that ever ear hath heard,
And sigh, and sing again; and when the rest
Of our young ladies, in their wanton blood,
Tell mirthful tales in course, that fill the room
With laughter, she will, with so sad a look,
Bring forth a story of the silent death
Of some forsaken virgin, which her grief
Will put in such a phrase, that, ere she end,
She'll send them weeping, one by one, away."

The marriage of Amintor with Evadne is celebrated; a masque is given; the whole court, except Aspatia and her father, is full of joy. There is some absurdity in making *her* one of the attendants on Evadne on the very night of the marriage—assisting, too, to undress the bride; but this is scarcely more censurable than the licentious jests of the women with their mistress. We may talk of the good old days; but certainly modesty was not one of the characteristics. Language which at this day would not be tolerated in men, is put into women's mouths; and the whole was heard by the fairer portion of the audience with delight. Well, the bride enters her room, the bridegroom approaches, and is thus accosted by Aspatia: —

" *Asp.* Go, and be happy in your lady's love.
May all the wrongs, that you have done to me,
Be utterly forgotten in my death!
I'll trouble you no more; yet I will take
A parting kiss, and will not be denied.
You'll come, my lord, and see the virgins weep
When I am laid in earth, though you yourself
Can know no pity. Thus I wind myself
Into this willow garland, and am prouder
That I was once your love, though now refused,
Than to have had another true to me.
So with my prayers I leave you, and must try
Some yet unpractised way to grieve and die."

She is soon to have her revenge. Before he can enter the bridal chamber, Evadne issues from it, and a scene ensues, no part of which can be given to the reader. It will be sufficient to observe, that Evadne is the mistress of the king; that to save her reputation is the only motive for this hasty marriage; and that she has sworn to him that she will never allow Amintor the privileges of a husband. The coolness, the effrontery, the insulting impudence with which she makes the acknowledgment, had surely never a parallel in real life. What follows, shows the progress which the slavish doctrine of obedience to kings had made: —

" *Amin.* No; let me know the man that wrongs me so,
That I may cut his body into motes,
And scatter it before the northern wind.
" *Evad.* You dare not strike him.
" *Amin.* Do not wrong me so.
Yes, if his body were a poisonous plant,
That it were death to touch, I have a soul
Will throw me on him.
" *Evad.* Why, it is the king.
" *Amin* The king!
" *Evad.* What will you do now?
" *Amin.* 'T is not the king!
" *Evad.* What did he make this match for, dull Amintor?
" *Amin.* Oh, thou hast named a word, that wipes away
All thoughts revengeful! In that sacred name,

'The king,' there lies a terror. What frail man
Dares lift his hand against it? Let the gods
Speak to him when they please; till when, let us
Suffer and wait.
" *Evad.* Why should you fill yourself so full of heat,
And haste so to my bed? I am no virgin.
" *Amin.* What devil put it in thy fancy, then,
To marry me?
" *Evad.* Alas, I must have one
To father children, and to bear the name
Of husband to me, that my sin may be
More honourable.
" *Amin.* What a strange thing am I!
" *Evad.* A miserable one: one that myself
Am sorry for.
" *Amin.* Why, show it then in this·
If thou hast pity, though thy love be none,
Kill me; and all true lovers, that shall live
In after-ages cross'd in their desires,
Shall bless thy memory, and call thee good;
Because such mercy in thy heart was found,
To rid a ling'ring wretch.
" *Evad.* I must have one
To fill thy room again, if thou wert dead;
Else, by this night, I would: I pity thee.
" *Amin.* These strange and sudden injuries have fallen
So thick upon me, that I lose all sense
Of what they are. Methinks, I am not wrong'd;
Nor is it aught, if from the censuring world
I can but hide it. Reputation!
Thou art a word, no more. — But thou hast shown
An impudence so high, that to the world,
I fear, thou wilt betray or shame thyself.
" *Evad.* To cover shame, I took thee; never fear
That I would blaze myself.
" *Amin.* Nor let the king
Know I conceive he wrongs me; then mine honour
Will thrust me into action, though my flesh
Could bear with patience. And it is some ease
To me in these extremes, that I knew this
Before I touch'd thee; else, had all the sins
Of mankind stood betwixt me and the king,
I had gone through 'em to his heart and thine.
I have left one desire: 't is not his crown
Shall buy me to thy bed, now I resolve
He has dishonour'd thee. Give me thy hand;

Be careful of thy credit, and sin close:
'T is all I wish. Upon thy chamber-floor
I 'll rest to-night.

There is vigour in the preceding verses. The feeling of outraged honour in Amintor is finely contrasted with the shameless depravity of Evadne. But surely the picture is overcharged.

The next scene (the second of Act II.) contains an admirable picture of Aspatia's grief. She is in her father's house (he is governor of the citadel), with her two maids. Having demanded if they were ever in love, and received an answer in the negative, she proceeds :—

" *Asp.* Then, my good girls, be more than women, wise :
At least be more than I was; and be sure
You credit any thing the light gives light to,
Before a man. Rather believe the sea
Weeps for the ruin'd merchant, when he roars;
Rather, the wind courts but the pregnant sails,
When the strong cordage cracks; rather, the sun
Comes but to kiss the fruit in wealthy autumn,
When all falls blasted. If you needs must love,
(Forced by ill-fate) take to your maiden bosoms
Two dead-cold aspics, and of them make lovers
They cannot flatter, nor forswear; one kiss
Makes a long peace for all. But man,
Oh, that beast man! Come, let 's be sad, my girls!
That down-cast of thine eye, Olympias,
Shews a fine sorrow. Mark, Antiphila;
Just such another was the nymph Œnone,
When Paris brought home Helen. Now, a tear;
And then thou are a piece expressing fully
The Carthage queen, when, from a cold sea-rock,
Full with her sorrow, she tied fast her eyes
To the fair Trojan ships; and, having lost them,
Just as thine eyes, down stole a tear. Antiphila,
What would this wench do, if she were Aspatia?
Here she would stand,, till some more pitying god
Turn'd her to marble! 'T is enough, my wench!
Show me the piece of needlework you wrought.
" *Ant.* Of Ariadne, madam?

" *Asp.* Yes, that piece. —
This should be Theseus; he has a cozening face:
You meant him for a man?
" *Ant.* He was so, madam.
" *Asp.* Why, then, 't is well enough. Never look back;
You have a full wind, and a false heart, Theseus!
Does not the story say, his keel was split,
Or his masts spent, or some kind rock or other
Met with his vessel?
" *Ant.* Not as I remember.
" *Asp.* It should have been so. Could the gods know this,
And not, of all their number, raise a storm?
But they are all as ill! This false smile
Was well express'd: just such another caught me!
You shall not go [on] so, Antiphila.
In this place work a quicksand,
And over it a shallow smiling water,
And his ship ploughing it; and then a Fear:
Do that Fear to the life, wench.
" *Ant.* 'T will wrong the story.
" *Asp.* 'T will make the story, wrong'd by wanton poets,
Live long, and be believed. But where 's the lady?
" *Ant.* There, madam.
" *Asp.* Fie! you have miss'd it here, Antiphila;
You are much mistaken, wench.
These colours are not dull and pale enough
To show a soul so full of misery
As this sad lady's was Do it by me;
Do it again, by me, the lost Aspatia,
And you shall find all true but the wild island.
Suppose I stand upon the sea-beach now,
Mine arms thus, and mine hair blown with the wind,
Wild as that desart; and let all about me
Be teachers of my story. Do my face
(If thou hadst ever feeling of a sorrow)
Thus, thus, Antiphila · Strive to make me look
Like Sorrow's monument! And the trees about me,
Let them be dry and leafless: let the rocks
Groan with continual surges; and, behind me,
Make all a desolation. Look, look, wenches!
A miserable life of this poor picture!
" *Olym.* Dear madam!
" *Asp.* I have done. Sit down; and let us
Upon that point fix all our eyes; that point there.
Make a dull silence, till you fell a sudden sadness
Give us new souls."

Though this may be somewhat exaggerated, it is founded in nature: it shows us a mind trembling on the verge of sorrow and madness. And the language is as poetical as the conception is just.

The part which Amintor has to act with the two brothers of Evadne, both his friends, is a delicate one. That with the king is still more so. Seeing the affectation of cheerfulness, in the countenances of Amintor and Evadne, he becomes jealous; he suspects that the marriage has been consummated; that Amintor had confessed it; and he seems to be revenged. Evadne assures him that she has not been faithless to him, and she calls her husband to confirm the fact. The remainder of this scene is very fine. Amintor, rendered furious by his dishonour, yet afraid to strike his king, — such is the sacredness of majesty — exhibits emotions of the most opposite nature. The most finished, though not, as we have already intimated, the most natural, feature of this strange picture, is the cool effrontery of the woman, who, for the sake of the lover, insulted the husband, — who trampled on that very husband in the lover's presence: —

" *Evad.* Stay, sir! — Amintor! — You shall hear. — Amintor!
" *Amin.* [*coming forward.*] What, my love?
" *Evad.* Amintor, thou hast an ingenuous look,
And should be virtuous: it amazeth me,
That thou canst make such base malicious lies!
" *Amin.* What, my dear wife!
" *Evad.* Dear wife! I do despise thee.
Why, nothing can be baser than to sow
Dissention amongst lovers.
" *Amin.* Lovers! who?
" *Evad.* The king and me.
" *Amin.* Oh, God!
" *Evad.* Who should live long, and love without distaste,
Were it not for such pickthanks as thyself.
Did you lie with me? Swear now, and be punish'd
In hell for this!
" *Amin.* The faithless sin I made

To fair Aspatia, is not yet revenged;
It follows me. — I will not lose a word
To this vile woman: But to you, my king,
The anguish of my soul thrusts out this truth,
You are a tyrant! And not so much to wrong
An honest man thus, as to take a pride
In talking with him of it.
" *Evad.* Now, sir, see
How loud this fellow lied.
" *Amin.* You that can know to wrong, should know how men
Must right themselves: What punishment is due
From me to him that shall abuse my bed?
Is it not death? Nor can that satisfy,
Unless I send your limbs through all the land,
To show how nobly I have freed myself.
" *King.* Draw not thy sword; thou knowest I cannot fear
A subject's hand; but thou shalt feel the weight
Of this, if thou dost rage.
" *Amin.* The weight of that!
If you have any worth, for heaven's sake, think
I fear not swords; for as you are mere man,
I dare as easily kill you for this deed,
As you dare think to do it. But there is
Divinity about you, that strikes dead
My rising passions: As you are my king,
I fall before you, and present my sword
To cut mine own flesh, if it be your will.
Alas! I am nothing but a multitude
Of walking griefs! Yet, should I murder you,
I might before the world take the excuse
Of madness: for, compare my injuries,
And they will well appear too sad a weight
For reason to endure! But, fall I first
Amongst my sorrows, ere my treacherous hand
Touch holy things! But why (I know not what
I have to say), why did you chuse out me
To make thus wretched? There were thousand fools
Easy to work on, and of state enough
Within the island.
" *Evad.* I would not have a fool;
It were no credit for me.
" *Amin.* Worse and worse!
Thou, that dar'st talk unto thy husband thus,
Profess thyself a whore, and, more than so,

Resolve to be so still —— It is my fate
To bear and bow beneath a thousand griefs,
To keep that little credit with the world!
But there were wise ones too; you might have ta'en
Another.
  " *King.* No; for I believe thee honest,
As thou wert valiant.
  " *Amin.* All the happiness
Bestowed upon me turns into disgrace.
Gods, take your honesty again, for I
Am loaden with it! — Good my lord the king,
Be private in it.
  " *Amin.* Thou may'st live, Amintor,
Free as thy king, if though will wink at this,
And be a means that we may meet in secret.
  " *Amin.* A bawd! Hold, hold, my breast! A bitter curse
Seize me, if I forget not all respects
That are religious, on another word
Sounded like that; and, through a sea of sins,
Will wade to my revenge, though I should call
Pains here, and after life, upon my soul!
  " *King.* Well, I am resolute you lay not with her;
And so I leave you. [*Exit* KING.
  " *Evad.* You must needs be prating;
And see what follows.
  " *Amin.* Pr'ythee, vex me not!
Leave me: I am afraid some sudden start
Will pull a murder on me.
  " *Evad.* I am gone:
I love my life well. [*Exit* EVADNE.
  " *Amin.* I hate mine as much. —
This 't is to break a troth! I should be glad,
If all this tide of grief would make me mad. [*Exit.*"

This scene is exceedingly well described; nor has it been surpassed by any dramatist, ancient or modern. There is great truth, too, in that (Scene 2. Act III.) where Amintor is persuaded to acquaint his friend Melantius with the guilt of Evadne. The noble and the soldier rise at this recital: Melantius vows revenge, even though it be on a king. He must first, however, seek his sister. If she confess her guilt, if she repent, and assist him in his revenge, her life

shall be spared: if not, it must fall a sacrifice to the outraged honour of the house. The scene in which he sounds her; her effrontery at first, and subsequent repentance, is well described. Having locked the door of the apartment, she inquires,

" *Evad.* Why?
" *Mel.* I will not have your gilded things, that dance
In visitation with their Milan skins,
Choke up my business.
" *Evad.* You are strangely disposed, sir.
" *Mel.* Good madam, not to make you merry.
" *Evad.* No; if you praise me it will make me sad.
" *Mel.* Such a sad commendation I have for you.
" *Evad.* Brother, the court hath made you witty,
And learn to riddle.
" *Mel.* I praise the court for 't: Has it learnt you nothing?
" *Evad.* Me?
" *Mel.* Ay, Evadne; thou art young and handsome,
A lady of a sweet complexion,
And such a flowing carriage, that it cannot
Chuse but inflame a kingdom.
" *Evad.* Gentle brother!
" *Mel.* 'T is yet in thy repentance, foolish woman,
To make me gentle.
" *Evad.* How is this?
" *Mel.* 'T is base;
And I could blush, at these years, thorough all
My honour'd scars, to come to such a parley.
" *Evad.* I understand you not.
" *Mel.* You dare not fool!
They, that commit that faults, fly the remembrance.
" *Evad.* My faults, sir! I would have you know, I care not
If they were written here, here on my forehead.
" *Mel.* Thy body is too little for the story;
The lusts of which would fill another woman,
Though she had twins within her.
" *Evad.* This is saucy:
Look you intrude no more! There lies your way.
" *Mel.* Thou art my way, and I will tread upon thee,
Till I find truth out.
" *Evad.* What truth is that you look for?
" *Mel.* Thy long-lost honour. Would the gods had set me
Rather to grapple with the plague, or stand
One of their loudest bolts! Come tell me quickly,

Do it without enforcement, and take heed
You swell me not above my temper.
  " *Evad.* How, sir!
Where got you this report?
  " *Mel.* Where there were people,
In every place.
  " *Evad.* They, and the seconds of it, are base people:
Believe them not, they lied.
  " *Mel.* Do not play with mine anger, do not, wretch!
[*Seizes her.*
I come to know that desperate fool that drew thee
From thy fair life: Be wise and lay him open.
  " *Evad.* Unhand me, and learn manners! Such another
Forgetfulness forfeits your life.
  " *Mel.* Quench me this mighty humour, and then tell me
Whose whore you are: for you are one, I know it.
Let all mine honours perish, but I'll find him,
Though he lie lock'd up in thy blood! Be sudden;
There is no facing it, and be not flatter'd!
The burnt air when the Dog reigns, is not fouler
Than thy contagious name, till thy repentance
(If the gods grant thee any) purge thy sickness.
  " *Evad.* Begone! You are my brother, that's your safety.
  " *Mel.* I'll be a wolf first! 'Tis, to be thy brother,
An infamy below the sin of coward.
I am as far from being part of thee,
As thou art from thy virtue. Seek a kindred
'Mongst sensual beasts, and make a goat thy brother;
A goat is cooler. Will you tell me yet?
  " *Evad.* If you stay here and rail thus, I shall tell you,
I'll have you whipp'd! Get you to your command,
And there preach to your centinels, and tell them
What a brave man you are: I shall laugh at you.
  " *Mel.* You are grown a glorious whore! Where be your
      fighters?
What mortal fool durst raise thee to this daring,
And I alive! By my just sword, he had safer
Bestride a billow when the angry North
Plows up the sea, or made heaven's fire his food!
Work me no higher. Will you discover yet?
  " *Evad.* The fellow's mad: Sleep, and speak sense.
  " *Mel.* Force my swoll'n heart no further: I would save
      thee
Your great maintainers are not here, they dare not:
'Would they were all, and arm'd! I would speak loud;

Here's one should thunder to 'em! Will you tell me?
Thou hast no hope to 'scape: He that dares most,
And damns away his soul to do thee service,
Will sooner snatch meat from a hungry lion,
Than come to rescue thee; thou hast death about thee.
Who has undone thine honour, poison'd thy virtue,
And, of a lovely rose, left thee a canker?
"*Evad.* Let me consider.
"*Mel.* Do, whose child thou wert,
Whose honour thou hast murder'd, whose grave open'd,
And so pull'd on the gods, that in their justice
They must restore him flesh again, and life,
And raise his dry bones to revenge this scandal.
"*Evad.* The gods are not of my mind; they had better
Let 'em lie sweet still in the earth; they'll stink here.
"*Mel.* Do you raise mirth out of my easiness? [*Draws.*
Forsake me, then, all weaknesses of nature,
That make men women! Speak, you whore, speak truth!
Or, by the dear soul of thy sleeping father,
This sword shall be thy lover! Tell, or I'll kill thee;
And, when thou hast told all, thou wilt deserve it.
"*Evad.* You will not murder me?
"*Mel.* No; 't is a justice, and a noble one,
To put the light out of such base offenders.
"*Evad.* Help!
"*Mel.* By thy foul self, no human help shall help thee,
If thou criest! When I have kill'd thee, as I
Have vow'd to do if thou confess not, naked,
As thou has left thine honour, will I leave thee;
That on thy branded flesh the world may read
Thy black shame, and my justice. Wilt thou bend yet?
"*Evad.* Yes.
"*Mel.* Up, and begin your story.
"*Evad.* Oh, I am miserable!
"*Mel.* 'T is true, thou art. Speak truth still.
"*Evad.* I have offended: Noble sir, forgive me.
"*Mel.* With what secure slave?
"*Evad.* Do not ask me, sir:
Mine own remembrance is a misery
Too mighty for me.
"*Mel.* Do not fall back again:
My sword 's unsheathed yet.
"*Evad.* What shall I do?
"*Mel.* Be true, and make your fault less.
"*Evad.* I dare not tell.
"*Mel.* Tell, or I'll be this day a-killing thee.

" *Evad.* Will you forgive me then?
" *Mel.* Stay; I must ask mine honour first.—
I have too much foolish nature in me: Speak.
" *Evad.* Is there none else here?
" *Mel.* None but a fearful conscience; that's too many.
Who is 't?
" *Evad.* Oh, hear me gently. It was the king.
" *Mel.* No more. My worthy father's and my services
Are liberally rewarded. King, I thank thee!
For all my dangers and my wounds, thou hast paid me
In my own metal: These are soldiers' thanks!—
How long have you lived thus, Evadne?
" *Evad.* Too long.
" *Mel.* Too late you find it. Can you be sorry?
" *Evad.* 'Would I were half as blameless.
" *Mel.* Evadne, thou wilt to thy trade again!
" *Evad.* First to my grave.
" *Mel.* 'Would gods thou hadst been so blest.
Dost thou not hate this king now? pr'ythee hate him.
Couldst thou not curse him? I command thee, curse him.
Curse till the gods hear, and deliver him
To thy just wishes! Yet, I fear, Evadne,
You had rather play your game out.
" *Evad.* No; I feel
Too many sad confusions here, to let in
Any loose flame hereafter.
" *Mel.* Dost thou not feel, 'mongst all those, one brave

That breaks out nob[illegible]d directs thine arm
To kill this base king?
" *Evad.* All the gods forbid it!
" *Mel.* No; all the gods require it,
They are dishonour'd in him.
" *Evad.* 'T is too fearful.
" *Mel.* You are valiant in his bed, and bold enough
To be a stale whore, and have your madam's name
Discourse for grooms and pages; and, hereafter,
When his cool majesty hath laid you by,
To be at pension with some needy sir,
For meat and coarser clothes: Thus far you know
No fear. Come, you shall kill him.
" *Evad.* Good sir!
" *Mel.* An 'twere to kiss him dead, thou shouldst smother him.
Be wise, and kill him. Canst thou live, and know
What noble minds shall make thee, see thyself

Found out with every finger, made the shame
Of all successions, and in this great ruin
Thy brother and thy noble husband broken?
Thou shalt not live thus. Kneel, and swear to help me,
When I shall call thee to it; or, by all
Holy in Heaven and earth, thou shalt not live
To breathe a full hour longer; not a thought!
Come, 't is a righteous oath. Give me thy hands,
And, both to heaven held up, swear, by that wealth
This lustful thief stole from thee, when I say it,
To let this foul soul out.
"*Evad.* Here I swear it;
And, all you spirits of abused ladies,
Help me in this performance!
"*Mel.* Enough. This must be known to none
But you and I, Evadne; not to your lord,
Though he be wise and noble, and a fellow
Dares step as far into a worthy action
As the most daring; ay, as far as justice.
Ask me not why. Farewell. [*Exit* MELANTIUS.
"*Evad.* 'Would I could say so to my black disgrace!
Oh, where have I been all this time? how 'friended,
That I should lose myself thus desperately,
And none for pity shew me how I wandered?
There is not in the compass of the light
A more unhappy creature: Sure, I am monstrous!
For I have done those follies, those mad mischiefs,
Would dare a woman. Oh, my loaden soul,
Be not so cruel to me; choke not up
The way to my repentance! Oh, my lord!"

There is something precipitate, to say the least of it, in this unexpected repentance of Evadne. That it is sincere, is evinced by her interview with her injured husband, to whom she kneels for pardon, and swears never to repeat the crime. He is slow in believing her; but in the end he does pardon her:—

"*Amin.* I am now dissolved:
My frozen soul melts May each sin thou hast
Find a new mercy! Rise; I am at peace.
Hadst thou been thus, thus excellently good,
Before that devil king tempted thy frailty,
Sure thou hadst made a star! Give me thy hand.

From this time I will know thee; and, as far
As honour gives me leave, be thy Amintor.
When we meet next, I will salute thee fairly,
And pray the gods to give thee happy days.
My charity shall go along with thee,
Though my embraces must be far from thee.
I should have kill'd thee, but this sweet repentance
Locks up my vengeance; for which thus I kiss thee—
The last kiss we must take! And 'would to Heaven
The holy priest, that gave our hands together,
Had given us equal virtues! Go, Evadne;
The Gods thus part our bodies. Have a care
My honour falls no farther: I am well then.
"*Evad.* All the dear joys here, and, above, hereafter,
Crown thy fair soul! Thus I take leave, my lord;
And never shall you see the foul Evadne,
Till she have tried all honour'd means, that may
Set her in rest, and wash her stains away."

In the mean time Melantius plans his revenge. He prevails at length on the insulted father of Aspatia to open the gates of the citadel to his party, and there he may bid defiance to the power of the king. But Evadne is more eager for the catastrophe than even her kindred: she resolves to assassinate the king in his bed. She approaches his room, and induces the gentleman in waiting to remain at a distance.—The scene is one of the noblest in the piece, or in any other piece ever produced by human genius:—

"*The Bed-chamber. The King discovered in Bed sleeping.*
"*Enter* EVADNE.

"*Evad.* The night grows horrible; and all about me
Like my black purpose. Oh, the conscience
Of a lost virgin! whither wilt thou pull me?
To what things, dismal as the depth of hell,
Wilt thou provoke me? Let no woman dare
From this hour be disloyal, if her heart be flesh,
If she have blood, and can fear. 'T is a daring
Above that desperate fool's that left his peace,
And went to sea to fight. 'T is so many sins,
An age cannot repent 'em; and so great,
The gods want mercy for! Yet, I must through 'em.

I have begun a slaughter on my honour,
And I must end it there.—He sleeps. Good heavens!
Why give you peace to this untemperate beast,
That hath so long transgress'd you? I must kill him,
And I will do it bravely: The mere joy
Tells me, I merit in it. Yet I must not
Thus tamely do it, as he sleeps; that were
To rock him to another world: My vengeance
Shall take him waking, and then lay before him
The number of his wrongs and punishments.
I'll shake his sins like furies, till I waken
His evil angel, his sick conscience;
And then I'll strike him dead. King, by your leave:
[*Ties his arms to the bed.*
I dare not trust your strength. Your grace and I
Must grapple upon even terms no more.
So: If he rail me not from my resolution,
I shall be strong enough.—My lord the king!
My lord!—He sleeps, as if he meant to wake
No more.—My lord!—Is he not dead already?—
Sir! My lord!
"*King.* Who's that?
"*Evad.* Oh, you sleep soundly, sir!
"*King.* My dear Evadne,
I have been dreaming of thee. Come to bed.
"*Evad.* I am come at length, sir; but how welcome?
"*King.* What pretty new device is this, Evadne?
What, do you tie me to you? By my love,
This is a quaint one.
"*Evad.* Stay, sir, stay;
You are too hot, and I have brought you physic
To temper your high veins.
I know you have a surfeited foul body;
And you must bleed.
"*King.* Bleed!
"*Evad.* Ay, you shall bleed! Lie still; and, if the devil,
Your lust, will give you leave, repent. This steel
Comes to redeem the honour that you stole,
King, my fair name; which nothing but thy death
Can answer to the world.
"*King.* How's this, Evadne?
"*Evad.* I am not she; nor bear I in this breast
So much cold spirit to be call'd a woman.
I am a tyger; I am any thing
That knows not pity. Stir not! If thou dost,

I 'll take thee unprepared; thy fears upon thee,
That make thy sins look double; and so send thee
(By my revenge, I will) to look those torments
Prepared for such black souls.

"*King.* Thou dost not mean this; 't is impossible;
Thou art too sweet and gentle.

"*Evad.* No, I am not.
I am as foul as thou art, and can number
As many such hells here. I was once fair,
Once I was lovely; not a blowing rose
More chastely sweet, till thou, thou. thou foul canker,
(Stir not) didst poison me. I was a world of virtue,
Till your curst court and you (Hell bless you for 't)
With your temptations on temptations,
Made me give up mine honour; for which, king,
I 'm come to kill thee.

"*King.* No!

"*Evad.* I am.

"*King.* Thou art not!
I pr'ythee speak not these things: Thou art gentle,
And wert not meant thus rugged.

"*Evad.* Peace, and hear me.
Stir nothing but your tongue, and that for mercy
To those above us, by whose lights I vow,
Those blessed fires that shot to see our sin,
If thy hot soul had substance with thy blood,
I would kill that too; which, being past my steel,
My tongue shall reach. Thou art a shameless villain!
A thing out of the overcharge of nature;
Sent, like a thick cloud, to disperse a plague
Upon weak catching women! such a tyrant,
That for his lust would sell away his subjects;
Ay, all his Heaven hereafter!

"*King.* Hear, Evadne,
Thou soul of sweetness, hear! I am thy king.

"*Evad.* Thou art my shame! Lie still, there's none about you,
Within your cries: All promises of safety
Are but deluding dreams. Thus, thus, thou foul man,
Thus I begin my vengeance! [*Stabs him.*

"*King.* Hold, Evadne!
I do command thee hold.

"*Evad.* I do not mean, sir,
To part so fairly with you; we must change
More of these love tricks yet.

"*King.* What bloody villain
Provoked thee to this murder?
"*Evad.* Thou, thou, monster.
"*King.* Oh!
"*Evad.* Thou kept'st me brave at court, and whor'd'st me, king;
Then married me to a young noble gentleman,
And whor'd'st me still.
"*King.* Evadne, pity me.
"*Evad.* Hell take me then! This for my lord Amintor!
This for my noble brother! and this stroke
For the most wrong'd of women! [*Kills him.*
"*King.* Oh! I die.
"*Evad.* Die all our faults together! I forgive thee. [*Exit.*"

What follows is less natural, and less worthy of the authors. Evadne flies to Amintor with the bloody knife, avows the deed, and begs for complete oblivion of the past. He is horrified at the recital; he declares that she has touched a life,

"The very name of which had power to chain
Up all my rage, and calm my wildest wrongs."

He leaves her in disdain, — disdain at the only sign of virtue she had ever exhibited; and she stabs herself. Aspatia too, in the disguise of a cavalier, has forced him to fight her, and she has received her death wound at his hand, in the very apartment which has witnessed the tragical fate of Evadne. He returns, sees Aspatia die, and stabs himself.

We must here observe that the greater part of this tragedy — all the finer scenes — are the work of Beaumont. It is a noble production. Though we cannot easily understand the conversion of Evadne, — though we do not perceive the gradations by which this moral reformation is effected, — we cannot withhold the tribute of our admiration to its sincerity, and to her commanding genius.

The fate of the licentious king was not very agreeable in the time of the Stuarts. About the time of the

Restoration, Waller rejected the fifth act, and added another containing a happy termination. Evadne, persevering in her old character, departs for Asia, to find some other monarch to captivate; and Aspatia is married to Amintor. The object of Waller is sufficiently clear: he wished to make his court to the second Charles by the alteration. In so doing he destroyed the whole character of the piece: though in the fourth act, which he retained unaltered, Evadne is shown so full of remorse, in the fifth she continues to be a harlot, and the adulteries of the king — here intended for Charles — are palliated by this abominable conclusion:—

> "Long may he reign, that is so far above
> All vice, all passion, but excess of love!"

It has been frequently asserted that the alteration in question was made at the express command of the monarch. This may be true enough; but it is not true that he forbade the representation of the original tragedy: it was acted so late as the closing years of his life, not in Waller's absurd form, but as left by the two poets. Waller wrote his fifth act in *rhyme*; and in so doing he exhibited about as much judgment as in the change of the catastrophe.*

After this splendid production, we will analyse no more of the tragedies, by either or both of these writers. There are, however, many that will amply repay the trouble of a perusal. Some comedies of these writers have met with an equal degree of praise. We do not, however, think that they are deserving of it. Take, for instance, that which has the greatest celebrity, —*Rule a Wife and have a Wife.* What are its merits?

* Since the above was written, the Maid's Tragedy has been revived at the Haymarket Theatre, with the exception of the fifth act, which is changed The king is murdered by Evadne, who poisons herself; and so far the effect of the piece is sustained. But Amintor and Aspasia are united Abstractedly we can have no objection to such a termination: there is, indeed, no reason why the innocent should suffer for the crimes of their connections: yet we perceive, in the recent change, a diminution of tragic interest.

Invention it has not; for the incidents, which are not numerous, are founded on a novel of Cervantes. Wit it has not; and very little humour. The situations are somewhat grotesque, and there is something like animation in the dialogue; but none of the characters have a prototype in human life. It is a most artificial, and, in our view, most tedious production. In fact, neither Beaumont nor Fletcher had much genius for comedy. When they handle passions, they are natural: when they attempt the humours of mankind, they give us, in general, a creation of their own, not what real life has ever exhibited. Many, however, of their compositions may be read with advantage,—at least, where the scenes are domestic. They enlarge our knowledge of English manners in the seventeenth century. Such are *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, a good satire on the citizens of London; *The Coxcomb*, and a few others. Of foreign manners, the authors had no knowledge whatever. Neither did they excel in the description of rural life in England: they were acquainted only with the humours and vices of large towns. Fletcher attempted a pastoral,—*The Faithful Shepherdess*,—which was condemned. His friend Beaumont was indignant at its fate: Ben Jonson contended that it was deserving of a better, and was equally severe on the public. But, with all deference to the judgment of these great men, we think the public, in the present instance, right. To us, this pastoral drama appears frigid, unimpassioned, unnatural,—without plot, without dialogue, without merit of any kind to give it interest. It seems to be immediately derived from the Spanish school, and it has all the defects of that once fashionable source. The world has long bid adieu to love-sick nymphs and sighing swains, who talk in language of the highest poetry.

Beaumont died in March, 1615—1616, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, at the entrance of St. Benedict's Chapel. This loss must have been severely felt

by Fletcher. Not only were they, in the strongest meaning of the word, friends, but they resided under the same roof, laboured together, ate together, and had the same common purse. At least, Aubrey tells us that they "lived together on the Bankside, not far from the play-house, both bachelors; had one bench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same clothes, clock, &c., between them." But Beaumont was not a bachelor: he had to wife a Kentish lady, by whom he left issue two daughters. He was greatly respected by Ben Jonson:

> "How do I love thee, Beaumont, and thy muse!"

will remain a permanent record of the fact.

Fletcher survived his friend near ten years. He, too, was honoured by the esteem of the wise and the great. He wrote plays with many other dramatists,— with Rowley, Field, Middleton, Massinger, and Ben Jonson. By some writers it has been contended that he was associated with no less a man than Shakespear in the composition of two dramas, — *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Cardenio*. For this assertion, there is no other evidence than the fact, that when these dramas were printed (1634 and 1653), they were ascribed to both writers. This, however, was a mere trick— probably of the booksellers— to command a more extensive sale. Neither is to be found in the two first folios of Shakespear (1623 and 1632) and neither bears the least impression of his manner. Add, that the two could scarcely have come into contact. We have reason to believe that he removed to Stratford before Fletcher had attracted the public notice. The latter was not favourably known before 1609; and we cannot believe that he could be so fortunate as to obtain the co-operation of one that, even in the earlier part of his career, had seldom, if ever, condescended to labour with others.

Fletcher died in August, 1625, and was buried

in the church of St. Mary Overy, Southwark. No memorial was placed over his grave, any more than over that of Beaumont. We learn from some doggrel verses by one who knew him well, — sir Aston Cockayne, — that he was laid in the same grave with Massinger. His death was sudden: he was carried away by the plague while meditating a retreat into the country. This writer had studied, with some attention, the dramatists of Spain: he admired their confused plots, their artificial, unnatural incidents. "Fletcher," says a late critic, "with the extremity of negligence, ran his actors into a chaos of incident and bustle, without much attention to propriety, probability, or, indeed, any thing more than throwing a comic light upon each isolated scene. The whole was wound up with some extraordinary accident, some sudden change of mind or temper in a leading personage, or such other inartificial expedient as no audience could admit to be fitting and natural; though they might be, perhaps, too much amused with the events preceding the catastrophe, to be critically scrupulous about the mode in which it was accomplished." Not unfrequently the plots of Fletcher consist of three or four distinct fables. Beaumont was much less faulty in this respect; but he, too, was censurable; and from neither is unity of action to be expected.

Of the comic powers of these writers, we have not spoken favourably. We are aware that a very different judgment has been passed on them; but we have seen enough of literature to know that opinions are frequently as hereditary as wealth. In *tragedy*, Beaumont and Fletcher are worthy of very high praise. We cannot, however, agree with a late critic *, that the former is as sublime, and the latter as pathetic, as Shakespear. In neither sense can they for a moment be compared with that great master of human nature. In both, however, they stand next to him — and this is praise enough. Their

* Gifford, Introduction to the Plays of Massinger.

language is highly exalted by Dryden, who thinks that in them it reached " its highest perfection ;" and that the words subsequently introduced, were rather superfluous than necessary." If, by language, this 'great writer means simply the purity of words, we fully concur with him : there is, indeed, this excellence in their dramas. But if he meant the collocation, no less than the choice, of words, he is wrong. Composition, as an *art*, was little known prior to the last century.

PHILIP MASSINGER.*

(1584—1640.)

THE father of Massinger was a domestic in the household of Henry, second earl of Pembroke. The capacity which he filled in that princely establishment, has not been discovered; but it was doubtless one of honour. In those days, gentlemen and the scions of nobility were eager to enter the service of some powerful nobleman. They were his confidential messengers to the sovereign and the nobility; they were his agents in his most important affairs; they swelled his retinue when he appeared at court, or on any public occasion; and he was often valued in proportion to the pomp which he displayed. The reason is, that though the feudal system was legally abolished, its spirit remained; and the connection between lord and vassal, as in more ancient times between patron and client, was, though much impaired, visible enough in most of our great households.

Philip Massinger was born in 1584, probably at Wilton, the seat of the earl, in the neighbourhood of Salisbury. In the family of that peer, agreeably to the manner of the times, he received the rudiments of his education. In his sixteenth year his noble patron died; but as William, the third earl, continued both his father and himself on his establishment, he did not greatly lose by that event. In 1602, the year after the young nobleman's succession, Philip was sent to Oxford, where

* Baker, Biographia Dramatica; Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary; Davies's Life of Massinger; Langbaine's History of the Stage; Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss; Gifford's Introduction to Massinger. We are more indebted to the last writer than all the rest.

he was entered a commoner of St. Alban's Hall. Here he remained four years. Whether he was supported by the earl or his own father, is doubtful: Wood says by the former, and adds, that on account of his devoting most of his time to poetry and romances, instead of logic and philosophy, that nobleman was offended, and withdrew the customary support, so that he was forced to leave college abruptly. More likely, however, it was the death of his father which rendered this secession necessary. Nor is it certain that he was so much indebted to the earl as Antony contends. One thing is clear, — that after he left college that nobleman did nothing for him. As earl William was a man of high honour and integrity, it has been supposed that there was some deeper cause of offence than has been recorded by the old biographers. This is exceedingly probable. It is said by Mr. Gifford, that, during his residence at college, Massinger exchanged the religion of his father for one that, at the period in question, was "the object of persecution, hatred, and terror." "A close and repeated perusal," adds the critic, "of Massinger's works has convinced me that he was a catholic. *The Virgin Martyr*, *The Renegado*, *The Maid of Honour*, exhibit innumerable proofs of it, to say nothing of those casual intimations that are scattered over his remaining dramas. A consciousness of this might prevent him from applying to the earl of Pembroke for assistance; or a knowledge of it might determine that nobleman to withhold his hand." This supposition would certainly account both for his precipitate departure from college, and for the disruption of the bonds which had so long united his family with the house of Herbert. There must, surely, have been some cause for this disruption, or a stain must for ever rest on that house. The *conduct* of Massinger, whatever his opinions might be, was correct; it, therefore, did not occasion the misfortune. We are, however, by no means sure that Mr. Gifford's conjecture is founded in truth. Though our dramatist is more favourable to the Roman catholic ecclesiastics he introduces on the

stage, than most of his contemporaries, who delight in abusing them, we do not see that he was a Roman catholic himself. *The Virgin Martyr* is, indeed, a tragedy from the heart; the subject was one in which the author delighted; but what protestant — at least, what protestant of the English church in the reigns of Elizabeth and James — could hesitate to adopt every word in that drama? The time is during the persecutions of Dioclesian, — a time, surely, when none of the corruptions which afterwards crept into the church, were suspected. *The Maid of Honaur* does not authorise the inference. She takes the veil, indeed; but because the author makes her do this, are we to conclude that he was of the same faith? The strongest passage for the conclusion is in *The Renegado,* where a relic concealed in the bosom of Paulina is supposed to protect her from the lust of the Turks. But even this does not, rigidly speaking, warrant it. During the period of Massinger, there were protestants who believed in the efficacy of some relics, or rather that *faith* in their efficacy would be available. There were many, too, who believed in the middle state. Thus Shakespear: —

"I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd *for a certain term* to walk the night,
And, for the day, confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away."

Was Shakespear a catholic? Assuredly there is as much reason to think *him* one, as Massinger. The truth is, that many of the Roman catholic opinions were adopted by the early protestants. The real presence, and sacerdotal absolution, were among them. For proof of this, we need only open the Book of Common Prayer, especially the one used in Elizabeth's reign. Let us not, however, be misunderstood. We do not positively assert that Massinger was *not* a catholic: all that we contend for is, that his plays do not afford internal evidence strong enough to warrant the inference.*

* See a few pages below, where other reasons are adduced for this view of the subject.

But whatever might be the cause which led to the estrangement of lord Pembroke from his dependent,— one that had an hereditary claim on his protection,— the misfortunes of the latter commenced with his departure from college. The stage was his only resource, — a precarious one at all times, and likely to be more so in proportion as the puritans increased. Many eminent men were dependent on it; but one only appears to have flourished by it. This was Shakespear, who yet derived more profit from his acting than from his writing, and from his share of the theatre than from both together. Ben Jonson could not have lived, had he not been a favourite at court, and pensioned by it. Beaumont and Fletcher were of good family, and had, probably, resources sufficient for their maintenance, independent of the stage. Greene, Peele, Marlowe, and a score besides, had, indeed, no other means of support; but they lived and died wretched. Unfortunately, Massinger, a name as dear to letters as any of them, Shakespear excepted, was doomed to be as wretched as any one of his contemporaries.

It is strange that, though Massinger, probably, arrived in London soon after he left college, we have nothing of his before 1622 — when he was fast approaching his fortieth year. The reason, however, is, that he wrote in conjunction with other dramatists. We know that he assisted Fletcher in several pieces. This fact rests on the authority of sir Aston Cockayne, who knew them both; and on a letter which he, Field, and Daborne wrote to the well-known manager, Mr. Henslow. That letter we have consigned to the foot of the page *; and it will not be read without sorrow.

* "To our most loving friend, Mr. Philip Hinchlow, esquire, These,]

"Mr. Hinchlow,

"You understand our unfortunate extremitie, and I doe not thincke you so void of of cristianitie but that you would throw so much money into the Thames as wee request now of you, rather than endanger so many innocent lives You know there is xl. more at least to be receaved of you for the play. We desire you to lend us vl. of that; which shall be allowed to you, without which we cannot be bayled, nor *I play any more* till this be dispatch'd It will lose you xxl ere the end of the next weeke, besides the hinderance of the next new play Pray, sir, consider our case with humanity, and now give us cause to acknowledge you

It confirms all that we have said respecting the precarious nature of the profession that so many eminent men were constrained to follow. — Though Fletcher was not the only writer whom Massinger thus assisted, so many dramas have perished, that we cannot ascertain the names. It is, moreover, certain that he wrote some himself, long prior to the first of his dramas now extant. Warburton's cook is said to have destroyed twelve which emanated from his pen, together with forty others of various authors.* We

our true freind in time of neede. Wee have entreated Mr. Davison to deliver this note, as well to witness your love as our promises, and alwayes acknowledgement to be ever

" Your most thanckfull and loving friends,

" NAT. FIELD."

" The money shall be abated out of the money remayns for *the play of Mr. Fletcher and ours*

" ROB DABORNE "

" I have ever found you a true loving friend to mee, and in soe small a suite, it beeinge honest, I hope you will not fail us.

" PHILIP MASSINGER."

" *Indorsed*:

" Received by mee Robert Davison of Mr. Hinchlow, for the use of Mr. Daboerne, Mr. Feeld, Mr. Messenger, the sum of v*l*.

" ROB. DAVISON."

* " Minerva's Sacrifice.
The Forced Lady.
Antonio and Valia
The Woman's Plot.
The Tyrant.
Philenzo and Hippolita.
The Judge.
Fast and Welcome.
Believe as you List.
The Honour of Women.
The Noble Choice And
The Parliament of Love.

" When it is added that, together with these, forty other manuscript plays of various authors were destroyed, it will readily be allowed that English literature has seldom sustained a greater loss than by the strange conduct of Mr. Warburton, who becoming the master of treasures which ages may not reproduce, *lodges them*, as he says, *in the hands of an ignorant servant*, and when, after a lapse of years, he condescends to revisit his hoards, finds that they have been burnt from an economical wish to save him the charges of more valuable brown paper! It is time to bring on shore the book-hunting passenger in Locher's *Navis Stultifera*, and exchange him for one more suitable to the rest of the cargo.

" Tardy, however, as Mr. Warburton was, it appears that he came in time to preserve three dramas from the general wreck; — The Second Maid's Tragedy, The Bugbear, and The Queen of Corsica.

" These, it is said, are now in the library of the marquis of Lansdowne, where they will, probably, remain in safety till moths, or damps, or fires mingle their 'forgotten dust' with that of their late companions.

" When it is considered at how trifling an expense a manuscript play may be placed beyond the reach of accident, the withholding it from the press will be allowed to prove a strange indifference to the ancient literature of the country. The fact, however, seems to be, that these treasures are made subservient to the gratification of a spurious rage for notoriety: it is not that any benefit may accrue from them either to the proprietors or others, that manuscripts are now hoarded, but that A or B may be celebrated for possessing what no other letter of the alphabet can hope to acquire. Nor is this all. The hateful passion of literary avarice (a compound

may, therefore, account for the employment of his time down to the year 1622, when *The Virgin-Martyr* appeared *in print*. How long it had been acted previously we do not know; but that it had been acted several times, is affirmed on the title of the first edition. Some portion of it,—probably the second act,—was written by Decker, and in a manner much inferior ot the rest.

The scene of this tragedy is Cæsarea. *Theophilus*, "a persecutor of the Christians," and officially so, by rescript of the emperor Dioclesian, has for his companion an evil spirit, *Harpax*, in the disguise of a page, who incites him to the greatest deeds of cruelty. For his zeal he is highly extolled by the emperor, who visits Cæsarea on his return from a war against the Parthians. And well, in the pagan sense, does he deserve the praise: when his two daughters, *Calista* and *Christeta*, turned Christians, he so dreadfully tormented them, that they were fain to renounce the new faith, revert to idolatry, and consecrate themselves to the service of the gods. *Artemia*, the daughter of Dioclesian, is present with him, and she expresses a wish that they were in *her* service.

of vanity and envy) is becoming epidemick, and branching out in every direction. It has many of the worst symptoms of that madness which once raged among the Dutch for the possession of tulips:—here, as well as in Holland, an artificial rarity is first created; and then made a plea for extortion, or a ground for low-minded and selfish exultation. I speak not of works never intended for sale, and of which, therefore, the owner may print as few or as many as his feelings will allow, but of those which are ostensibly designed for the publick, and which, notwithstanding, prove the editors to labour under this odious disease. Here, an old manuscript is brought forward, and after a few copies are printed, the press is broken up, that there may be a pretence for selling them at a price which none but a collector can reach: there, explanatory notes are engraved for a work of general use, and, as soon as twenty or thirty impressions are taken off, destroyed with gratuitous malice, (for it deserves no other name,) that there may be a mad competition for the favoured copies! To conclude, for this is no pleasant subject, books are purchased now at extravagant rates, not because they are good, but because they are scarce, so that a fire or an enterprising trunk-maker that should take off nearly the whole of a worthless work, would instantly render the small remainder invaluable." (Gifford's Massinger, vol. i.)

"*Theoph.* They are the gods', great lady,
They were most happy in your service else:
On these, when they fell from their father's faith,
I used a judge's power, entreaties failing
(They being seduced) to win them to adore
The holy powers we worship; I put on
The scarlet robe of bold authority,
And, as they had been strangers to my blood,
Presented them, in the most horrid form,
All kind of tortures; part of which they suffer'd
With Roman constancy.
"*Artem.* And could you endure,
Being a father, to behold their limbs
Extended on the rack?
"*Theoph.* I did; but must
Confess there was a strange contention in me,
Between the impartial office of a judge,
And pity of a father; to help justice
Religion stept in, under which odds
Compassion fell — yet still I was a father;
For e'en then, when the flinty hangman's whips
Were worn with stripes spent on their tender limbs,
I kneel'd and wept, and begg'd them, though they would
Be cruel to themselves, they would take pity
On my gray hairs: now note a sudden change,
Which I with joy remember; those, whom torture,
Nor fear of death could terrify, were o'ercome
By seeing of my sufferings; and so won,
Returning to the faith that they were born in,
I gave them to the gods: and be assured,
I that used justice with a rigorous hand,
Upon such beauteous virgins, and mine own,
Will use no favour, where the cause commands me,
To any other; but, as rocks, be deaf
To all entreaties."

He who did not spare his own offspring, was not likely to spare others; and by Dioclesian he is urged to persevere in his zeal. He is seconded by *Sapritius*, the governor of Cæsarea, who is in high favour with the emperor. Sapritius has a son, *Antoninus*, who has distinguished himself in the late wars, — so much so, indeed, that when Artemia offers to take him for her husband, the proud emperor does not object to the

match. But his heart is another's: it is secretly in the power of *Dorothea*, who is soon to be the Virgin-Martyr. He does not, because he dare not, openly refuse Artemia; but his hesitation raises *her* anger, and it is evident, that if he do not consent, he will be obnoxious alike to the wrath of his father and of the imperial house. No sooner do they leave the apartment of the governor's palace, than he vents his despair to his friend *Macrinus*: —

"*Anton.* Oh, I am lost, for ever lost, Macrinus!"

Macrinus wonders why the proposed hand of a great princess, — one fair as she is lofty, — should have this effect: —

"*Anton.* Yet poison still is poison,
Though drunk in gold; and all these flattering glories
To me, ready to starve, a painted banquet,
And no essential food. When I am scorch'd
With fire, can flames in any other quench me?
What is her love to me, greatness, or empire,
That am slave to another, who alone
Can give me ease or freedom?
"*Mac.* Sir, you point at
Your dotage on the scornful Dorothea
Is she, though fair, the same day to be named
With best Artemia? In all their courses,
Wise men propose their ends: with sweet Artemia,
There comes along pleasure, security,
Usher'd by all that in this life is precious.
With Dorothea (though her birth be noble,
The daughter to a senator of Rome,
By him left rich, yet with a private wealth,
And far inferiour to yours) arrives
The emperor's frown, which, like a mortal plague,
Speaks death is near; the princess' heavy scorn,
Under which you will shrink; your father's fury,
Which to resist, even piety forbids: —
And but remember that she stands suspected
A favourer of the Christian sect; she brings
Not danger, but assured destruction with her.
This truly weigh'd, one smile ofgreat Artemia
Is to be cherish'd, and preferr'd before
All joys in Dorothea therefore leave her.

" *Anton.* In what thou think'st thou art most wise, thou art
Grossly abused, Macrinus, and most foolish.
For any man to match above his rank,
Is but to sell his liberty. With Artemia
I still must live a servant ; but enjoying
Divinest Dorothea, I shall rule,
Rule as becomes a husband . for the *danger,*
Or call it, if you will, *assured destruction,*
I slight it thus. — If, then, thou art my friend,
As I dare swear thou art, and wilt not take
A governor's place upon thee, be my helper.
" *Mac.* You know I dare, and will do any thing ;
Put me unto the test.
" *Anton.* Go then, Macrinus,
To Dorothea; tell her I have worn,
In all the battles I have fought, her figure,
Her figure in my heart, which, like a deity,
Hath still protected me. Thou can'st speak well,
And of thy choicest language spare a little,
To make her understand how much I love her,
And how I languish for her. Bear these jewels,
Sent in the way of sacrifice, not service,
As to my goddess · all lets thrown behind me,
Or fears that may deter me, say, this morning
I mean to visit her by the name of friendship:
— No words to contradict this.
" *Mac.* I am yours .
And, if my travail this way be ill spent,
Judge not my readier will by the event. [*Exeunt.*"

Dorothea is described as one who scarcely belongs to this world. Her sole occupation is either in prayer, or in works of charity. And well may it be ; for as Theophilus has a demon, so she has an angel page. What follows is exquisitely beautiful :—

" *Dor.* My book and taper.
" *Ang.* Here, most holy mistress.
" *Dor.* Thy voice sends forth such musick, that I never
Was ravish'd with a more celestial sound.
Were every servant in the world like thee,
So full of goodness, angels would come down
To dwell with us: thy name is Angelo,
And like that name thou art ; get thee to rest,
Thy youth with too much watching is opprest.
" *Ang.* No, dear lady, I could weary stars,

And force the wakeful moon to lose her eyes
By my late watching, but to wait on you.
When at your prayers you kneel before the altar,
Methinks I 'm singing with some quire in heaven,
So blest I hold me in your company:
Therefore, my most loved mistress, do not bid
Your boy, so serviceable, to get hence;
For then you break his heart.
"*Dor.* Be nigh me still, then;
In golden letters down I 'll set that day,
Which gave thee to me. Little did I hope
To meet such worlds of comfort in thyself,
This little, pretty body; when I, coming
Forth of the temple, heard my beggar-boy,
My sweet-faced, godly beggar-boy, crave an alms,
Which with glad hand I gave, with lucky hand!—
And, when I took thee home, my most chaste bosom,
Methought, was fill'd with no hot wanton fire,
But with a holy flame, mounting since higher,
On wings of cherubins, than it did before.
"*Ang.* Proud am I, that my lady's modest eye
So likes so poor a servant.
"*Dor.* I have offer'd
Handfuls of gold but to behold thy parents.
I would leave kingdoms, were I queen of some,
To dwell with thy good father, for, the son
Bewitching me so deeply with his presence,
He that begot him must do 't ten times more.
I pray thee, my sweet boy, shew me thy parents,
Be not ashamed.
"*Ang.* I am not: I did never
Know who my mother was; but, by yon palace,
Fill'd with bright heavenly courtiers, I dare assure you,
And pawn these eyes upon it, and this hand,
My father is in heaven: and, pretty mistress,
If your illustrious hourglass spend his sand
No worse than yet it does, upon my life,
You and I both shall meet my father there,
And he shall bid you welcome.
"*Dor.* A blessed day!
We all long to be there, but lose the way. [*Exeunt.*"

These attendant ministers of a higher, or lower nature, — angels and demons, — often figure in the early history of the church. The dramatist, therefore, does not violate propriety. Nor, until we can determine

when the miraculous gifts which Christ vouchsafed to his church, — those which the apostles transmitted to their disciples, — ceased to be manifest, can we say that he outrages probability. Justin, Tatius, Arnobius, Irenæus, nay, writers so late as Augustine and Gregory the Great, assert that angels were, in their days, the visitants of mankind. Dorothea had met with *her* angel in the garb of a beggar. This is in conformity with the apostolic injunction to hospitality and alms-giving, — "For know ye not," says the apostle of the Gentiles, "that many have entertained angels unawares?" We must not, therefore, regard this as a poetic creation; it was the belief of the age; and Massinger would have erred had he entirely overlooked it. That age was so near to the apostolic, that, without incurring the charge of superstition, he might adopt the belief. In this case, however, he did no more than follow a legend which we have seen in Bollandus; but as that huge collection is not at this moment before us, we cannot refer to the place.

Macrinus has no eloquence sufficient to move Dorothea; that of Antoninus, who follows him, is equally ineffectual. She has never given him encouragement: she could not love him if he were a Christian; and, though she does not say so, she has evidently taken the vow of chastity, — an engagement that may be traced to the earliest age of the church. She is the bride of heaven, and will have no human lord. In vain does he boast his fortunes: —

> "Sir, for your fortunes, were they mines of gold,
> He that I love is richer; and for worth,
> You are to him lower than any slave
> Is to a monarch"

He offers her the heart which Cæsar's daughter could not move: in vain; she exhorts him only to become a Christian. During part of the scene they are overlooked by Artemia and Sapritius; the one mortally enraged at his rejection of her for another; the other that he

should leave a princess for a vile Christian. Antoninus is to die; Dorothea to die too; but, with a refinement of vengeance, she is first to be made an apostate. This is to be effected by the daughters of Theophilus, who exclaims —

"If she refuse it,
The Stygian damps, breeding infectious airs,
The mandrake's shrieks, the basilisk's killing eye,
The dreadful lightning that does crush the bones,
And never singe the skin, shall not appear
Less fatal to her, than my zeal made hot
With love unto my gods."

Christeta and Calista enter, and commence their battery, but are soon silenced; in fact, such is her reasoning, that instead of making her pagan, they become Christian, and promise, if necessary, to seal their faith by their blood. Nor do they merely promise. When brought with Dorothea before their father, Sapritius, Artemia, and a priest with an image of Jupiter, in the expectation that they have prevailed on the Christian maiden to offer incense, the old man is fatally undeceived: —

"*Theoph.* Forward, my twins of comfort, and, to teach her,
Make a joint offering.
"*Christ.* Thus — } [*they both spit at the image,*
"*Cal.* And thus —— } *throw it down, and spurn it.*
"*Harp.* Profane
And impious! stand you now like a statue?
Are you the champion of the gods? where is
Your holy zeal, your anger?
"*Theoph.* I am blasted;
And, as my feet were rooted here, I find
I have no motion; I would I had no sight too!
Or if my eyes can serve to any use,
Give me, thou injured Power! a sea of tears,
To expiate this madness in my daughters;
For, being themselves, they would have trembled at
So blasphemous a deed in any other: ——
For my sake, hold awhile thy dreadful thunder,
And give me patience to demand a reason
For this accursed act.
"*Dor.* 'T was bravely done.

"*Theoph.* Peace, damn'd enchantress, peace! — I should
look on you
With eyes made red with fury, and my hand,
That shakes with rage, should much outstrip my tongue,
And seal my vengeance on your hearts; — but nature,
To you that have fallen once, bids me again
To be a father. Oh! how durst you tempt
The anger of great Jove?
"*Dor.* Alack, poor Jove!
He's no swaggerer; how smug he stands!
He'll take a kick, or any thing.
"*Sap.* Stop her mouth.
"*Dor.* It is the patient'st godling; do not fear him;
He would not hurt the thief that stole away
Two of his golden locks; indeed he could not:
And still 't is the same quiet thing.
"*Theoph.* Blasphemer!
Ingenious cruelty shall punish this,
Thou art past hope: but for you yet, dear daughters,
Again bewitch'd, the dew of mild forgiveness
May gently fall, provided you deserve it
With true contrition: be yourselves again;
Sue to the offended deity.
"*Christ.* Not to be
The mistress of the earth.
"*Cal.* I will not offer
A grain of incense to it, much less kneel,
Nor look on it but with contempt and scorn,
To have a thousand years conferr'd upon me
Of worldly blessings. We profess ourselves
To be, like Dorothea, Christians,
And owe her for that happiness.
"*Theoph.* My ears
Receive, in hearing this, all deadly charms,
Powerful to make man wretched.
"*Artem.* Are these they
You bragg'd could convert others!
"*Sap.* That want strength
To stand themselves!
"*Harp.* Your honour is engaged,
The credit of your cause depends upon it;
Something you must do suddenly.
"*Theoph.* And I will.
"*Harp.* They merit death; but, falling by your hand,
'T will be recorded for a just revenge,
And holy fury in you.

" *Theoph.* Do not blow
The furnace of a wrath thrice hot already;
Ætna is in my breast, wildfire burns here,
Which only blood must quench. Incensed Power!
Which from my infancy I have adored,
Look down with favourable beams upon
The sacrifice, though not allow'd thy priest,
Which I will offer to thee; and be pleased
(My fiery zeal inciting me to act)
To call that justice others may style murder.
Come, you accurs'd, thus by the hair I drag you
Before this holy altar; thus look on you,
Less pitiful than tigers to their prey:
And thus with mine own hand I take that life
Which I gave to you. [*Kills them.*
" *Dor.* O most cruel butcher!
" *Theoph.* My anger ends not here: hell's dreadful porter,
Receive into thy ever open gates,
Their damned souls and let the Furies' whips
On them alone be wasted; and when death
Closes these eyes, 't will be Elysium to me
To hear their shrieks and howlings. Make me, Pluto,
Thy instrument to furnish thee with souls
Of that accursed sect; nor let me fall,
Till my fell vengeance hath consumed them all.
[*Exit* HARPAX *hugging him.*"

The character of Dorothea is well drawn. All the softness of woman is lost in the zeal of the Christian. She can dare and suffer. What the two re-converts, Calista and Christeta, do in the scene before us, was done by many Christian virgins in the early ages of the church. They scoffed at Jove, spit on his image, insulted his priests. Such a display, however, is less to our taste than the gentle endurance that ought always to characterise the sex.

In the mean time Antoninus is sick, and all his father's tenderness revives: he calls on Dorothea, and Dorothea is, for the vilest purposes, brought to his bed-side. Hitherto he is a pagan: he is willing to seize the opportunity, base as it is; but he is awed by the majestic look of the maiden; his soul sinks within him; he experiences nobler feelings; and he assures her that

"for the Roman empire he would not wound her honour." The incensed Sapritius rushes in, upbraids the youth for his pusillanimity, and swears that the proud maiden shall be undone by one of his slaves. That slave is a Briton, and Sapritius asks him —

"What wouldst thou do to gain thy liberty?
"*Slave.* Do! liberty! fight naked with a lion,
Venture to pluck a standard from the heart
Of an arm'd legion. Liberty! I 'd thus
Bestride a rampire, and defiance spit
I' the face of death, then, when the battering-ram
Was fetching his career backward, to pash
Me with his horns in pieces. To shake my chains off,
And that I could not do 't but by thy death,
Stoodst thou on this dry shore, I on a rock
Ten pyramids high, down would I leap to kill thee,
Or die myself. what is for man to do
I 'll venture on, to be no more a slave.
"*Sap.* Thou shalt, then, be no slave, for I will set thee
Upon a piece of work is fit for man,
Brave for a Briton: — drag that thing aside,
* * *
"*Slave.* * * * is this your manly service?
A devil scorns to do it; 't is for a beast,
A villain, not a man: I am, as yet,
But half a slave; but, when that work is past,
A damned whole one, a black ugly slave,
The slave of all base slaves: — do 't thyself, Roman,
'T is drudgery fit for thee.
"*Sap.* He 's bewitch'd too:
Bind him, and with a bastinado give him,
Upon his naked belly, two hundred blows.
"*Slave.* Thou art more slave than I. [*He is carried in.*"

But if this noble-minded slave thus refuses to do the deed, the revengeful old pagan calls others. In vain: she is miraculously protected by the angel her page, until she is expelled the house.

In a subsequent scene, Dorothea is led to the place of execution. Antoninus is resolved to see the last scene, and, with his friend Macrinus, he is there before her arrival: —

"*Anton.* Is this the place, where virtue is to suffer,
And heavenly beauty, leaving this base earth,
To make a glad return from whence it came?
Is it, Macrinus?
"*Mac.* By this preparation,
You well may rest assured that Dorothea
This hour is to die here.
"*Anton.* Then with her dies
The abstract of all sweetness that 's in woman!
Set me down, friend, that, ere the iron hand
Of death close up mine eyes, they may at once
Take my last leave both of this light and her:
For, she being gone, the glorious sun himself
To me 's Cimmerian darkness.
"*Mac.* Strange affection!
Cupid once more hath changed his shafts with Death,
And kills, instead of giving life.
"*Anton.* Nay, weep not;
Though tears of friendship be a sovereign balm,
On me they 're cast away. It is decreed
That I must die with her; our clue of life
Was spun together.
"*Mac.* Yet, sir, 't is my wonder,
That you, who, hearing only what she suffers,
Partake of all her tortures, yet will be,
To add to your calamity, an eyewitness
Of her last tragick scene, which must pierce deeper,
And make the wound more desperate.
"*Anton.* Oh, Macrinus!
'T would linger out my torments else, not kill me,
Which is the end I aim at: being to die too,
What instrument more glorious can I wish for,
Than what is made sharp by my constant love
And true affection? It may be, the duty
And loyal service, with which I pursued her,
And seal'd it with my death, will be remember'd
Among her blessed actions; and what honour
Can I desire beyond it?

"*Enter a Guard, bringing in* DOROTHEA, *a Headsman before her followed by* THEOPHILUS, SAPRITIUS, *and* HARPAX.

See, she comes;
How sweet her innocence appears! more like
To heaven itself, than any sacrifice
That can be offer'd to it. By my hopes
Of joys hereafter, the sight makes me doubtful

In my belief; nor can I think our gods
Are good, or to be served, that take delight
In offerings of this kind: that, to maintain
Their power, deface the master-piece of nature,
Which they themselves come short of. She ascends,
And every step raises her nearer heaven.
What god soe'er thou art, that must enjoy her,
Receive in her a boundless happiness!"

Her constancy in suffering, her joyful submission to the ardency of her hopes, her eager yearning for the final blow, make a deep impression on Antoninus, who exclaims: —

"I feel a holy fire,
That yields a comfortable heat within me;
I am quite alter'd from the thing I was.
See! I can stand, and go alone; thus kneel
To heavenly Dorothea, touch her hand
With a religious kiss.

" *Re-enter* SAPRITIUS *and* THEOPHILUS.

" *Sap.* He is well now,
But will not be drawn back.
" *Theoph.* It matters not,
We can discharge this work without his help.
But see your son.
" *Sap.* Villain!
" *Anton.* Sir, I beseech you,
Being so near our ends, divorce us not.
" *Theoph.* I'll quickly make a separation of them:
Hast thou aught else to say?
" *Dor.* Nothing, but to blame
Thy tardiness in sending me to rest;
My peace is made with heaven, to which my soul
Begins to take her flight: strike, O! strike quickly;
And, though you are unmoved to see my death,
Hereafter, when my story shall be read;
As they were present now, the hearers shall
Say this of Dorothea, with wet eyes,
She lived a virgin, and a virgin dies. [*Her head struck off.*
" *Anton.* O, take my soul along, to wait on thine!
" *Mac.* Your son sinks too. [ANTONINUS *sinks.*
" *Sap.* Already dead!
" *Theoph.* Die all
That are, or favour this accursed sect;
I triumph in their ends, and will raise up

A hill of their dead carcasses, to o'erlook
The Pyrenean hills, but I 'll root out
These superstitious fools, and leave the world
No name of Christian."

Here the tragedy should end; but there is yet another act; it is determined that Theophilus, the savage Theophilus, shall die a Christian; — for such was the last prayer of Dorothea. He becomes one; and in the presence of Dioclesian, in Rome itself, he avows the change. The emperor is at first amazed; he wishes Theophilus to plead madness, — any thing to save his life: the old man does supplicate, but not for life: —

" *Theoph.* As ever I deserved your favour, hear me,
And grant one boon; 't is not for life I sue for,
Nor is it fit that I, that ne'er knew pity
To any Christian, being one myself,
Should look for any; no, I rather beg
The utmost of your cruelty; I stand
Accomptable for thousand Christians' deaths;
And, were it possible that I could die
A day for every one, then live again
To be again tormented, 't were to me
An easy penance, and I should pass through
A gentle cleansing fire; but, that denied me,
It being beyond the strength of feeble nature,
My suit is, you would have no pity on me.
In mine own house there are a thousand engines
Of studied cruelty, which I did prepare
For miserable Christians; let me feel,
As the Sicilian did his brazen bull,
The horrid'st you can find, and I will say,
In death, that you are merciful.
" *Diocle.* Despair not,
In this thou shalt prevail. Go fetch them hither: [*Exit guard.*
Death shall put on a thousand shapes at once,
And so appear before thee; racks, and whips! ——
Thy flesh, with burning pincers torn, shall feed
The fire that heats them; and what 's wanting to
The torture of thy body, I 'll supply
In punishing thy mind. Fetch all the Christians
That are in hold; and here, before his face,
Cut them in pieces.
" *Theoph.* 'T is not in thy power:

It was the first good deed I ever did.
They are removed out of thy reach; howe'er
I was determined for my sins to die,
I first took order for their liberty,
And still I dare thy worst.

"*Re-enter* Guard *with the instruments of torture.*

"*Diocle.* Blind him, I say;
Make every artery and sinew crack:
The slave that makes him give the loudest shriek,
Shall have ten thousand drachmas: wretch! I'll force thee
To curse the power thou worship'st.
Theoph. Never, never:
No breath of mine shall e'er be spent on him,
[*They torment him.*
But what shall speak his majesty or mercy.
I' m honour'd in my sufferings. Weak tormentors,
More tortures, more: — alas! you are unskilful —
For heaven's sake more; my breast is yet untorn:
Here purchase the reward that was propounded.
The irons cool, — here are arms yet, and thighs;
Spare no part of me.
"*Max.* He endures beyond
The sufferance of a man.
"*Sap.* No sigh nor groan,
To witness he hath feeling.
"*Diocle.* Harder, villains!

"*Enter* HARPAX.

"*Harp.* Unless that he blaspheme, he's lost for ever.
If torments ever could bring forth despair,
Let these compel him to it. oh me,
My ancient enemies again! [*Falls down.*

"*Enter* DOROTHEA *in a white robe, a crown upon her head, led in by* ANGELO; ANTONINUS, CALISTA, *and* CHRISTETA *following, all in white, but less glorious;* ANGELO *holds out a crown to* THEOPHILUS.

"*Theoph.* Most glorious vision! ——
Did e'er so hard a bed yield man a dream
So heavenly as this? I am confirm'd,
Confirm'd, you blessed spirits, and make haste
To take that crown of immortality
You offer to me. Death, till this blest minute,
I never thought thee slow-paced; nor would I
Hasten thee now, for any pain I suffer,
But that thou keep'st me from a glorious wreath,

Which through this stormy way I would creep to,
And, humbly kneeling, with humility wear it.
Oh! now I feel thee: — blessed spirits! I come;
And, witness for me all these wounds and scars,
I die a soldier in the Christian wars. [*Dies*.
"*Sap.* I have seen thousands tortured, but ne'er yet
A constancy like this.
"*Harp.* I am twice damn'd.
"*Ang.* Haste to thy place appointed, cursed fiend!
In spite of hell, this soldier 's not thy prey;
'T is I have won, thou that hast lost the day. [*Exit*."

The Old Law is the second of the extant dramas attributed to Massinger. As, however, it was written in conjunction with Middleton and Rowley, who even wrote the greater part of it, we will not notice it.

The Unnatural Combat, a drama of considerable power, we really dare not analyse: the plot is a dreadful one, — too dreadful for thought. The choice of it does little honour to the author; he had before him the boundless field of history, of tradition, of romance; and we cannot but wonder at the perversity of taste which caused him to select so revolting a subject.—His next piece, *The Bondman*, is also one of power. He dedicated it to Philip, earl of Montgomery, and was, apparently, well rewarded by that nobleman. Philip was the brother of the then earl of Pembroke; and in the dedication, Massinger speaks with gratitude of his hereditary connection with the Herbert family: — "However I could never arrive at the happiness, to be made known to your lordship; yet a desire, born with me, to make a tender of all duties and service to the noble family of the Herberts, descended to me as an inheritance from my dead father, Arthur Massinger. Many years he happily spent in the service of your honourable house, and died a servant in it; leaving heirs to be ever most glad and ready to be at the command of all such as derive themselves from his most honoured master, your lordship's most noble father." It is remarkable, that in the whole of this dedication there is a careful silence as to the then lord Pembroke. There had, as we have before insinu-

ated, been some cause of alienation on the part of this nobleman. Yet, whatever it was, it did no discredit to Massinger, who writes as one that had given no just cause of offence. Fortunately for him, he found a better patron in the younger than the elder brother. What pecuniary reward he received, does not appear; but it must have been considerable, or he would not, when speaking of his obligations, have said, at a subsequent period: —

> "Mine being more
> Than they could owe, who since or heretofore
> Have labour'd with exalted lines to raise
> Brave piles, or rather pyramids of praise,
> To Pembroke * and his family."

But no advantage that he derived from this nobleman was sufficient to render unnecessary his writing for the stage. Yet he had no liking for the profession: he was, as he truly said, compelled to remain in it, when his inclination was averse from it. He wrote with great facility; — his pieces generally amounting to two every year. In the whole, the number amounted to thirty-eight, of which more than half have perished. It might have been supposed that a writer so prolific, and evidently so popular, would require no individual patron. Such, however, was not the fact. Successful dramas were then much less profitable than we should suppose. Whether sold at once to the managers, or acted for the author's benefit, one seldom, if ever, brought more than 20*l.*, and in general it was less. If we estimate the two dramas annually at 30*l.*, we shall not be *below* the truth. But he might, if the managers gave consent, *publish* them after they had been acted. The usual price of a drama from the booksellers was, in Shakespear's time, 20 nobles, or somewhat less than 7*l.* From 1616 to 1640, when Massinger died, it might be a little more; but it certainly never exceeded 10*l.* Add the dedication fee, which was 40*s.*, and we shall per-

* By the death of his elder brother without male issue, Montgomery succeeded to the title and estates of Pembroke.

ceive that his income, supposing even that all his pieces were successful, and allowed to be printed, could not exceed 54*l.* per annum. But this would be a fallacious estimate: all his dramas were not successful; so that from this petty sum must be deducted something — perhaps one fifth. With this calculation before us, we cannot be surprised at the melancholy letter which he and his coadjutors wrote to Henslowe*, or at the desponding tone of his dedications. Thus in the one which he addressed to two gentlemen of rank, and prefixed to his *Maid of Honour*, he thanks them for their patronage of him and his "despised studies;" and he declares that but for their "frequent courtesies and favours," he could not possibly have subsisted! Such, alas! is the lot of genius! Of this quality, few had more than Massinger, who besides had no inconsiderable portion of learning; yet he maintained a constant struggle with adversity. As Mr. Gifford well observes, "Jonson, Fletcher, Shirley, and others not superior to him in ability, had their periods of good fortune, — their bright as well as their stormy days: but Massinger seems to have enjoyed no gleam of sunshine; his life was all one wintry day, and 'shadows, clouds, and darkness' rested upon it." He was, indeed, singularly unfortunate: but for casual aid he could not have subsisted. "In this precarious state of dependence," observes the same feeling biographer, — for with all his acerbity he *was* feeling, — "passed the life of a man who is charged with no want of industry, suspected of no extravagance, and whose works were, at that very period, the boast and delight of the stage!" But why should our sympathies be confined to one, when hundreds have been in a predicament equally deplorable?

The Renegado was first acted in 1624, and first published in 1629. This is a fine performance, and we will give a very brief analysis of it. *Vitelli*, a Venetian nobleman, has lost his sister, *Paulina*, who has been carried away to Tunis by the renegado, *Grimaldi*. Her

* See before, p. 256.

disconsolate brother, accompanied by his servant, *Gazet*, and his confessor, *Francisco*, goes in search of her, with the intention of redeeming her if she can be snatched from the lust of her owner. To lull suspicion, no less than for his own security, he assumes the disguise of a merchant, and opens a shop, while Francisco inquires after the lost Paulina. After some time, the father returns, and Vitelli eagerly says: —

"O welcome, sir! stay of my steps in this life,
And guide to all my blessed hopes hereafter.
What comforts, sir? Have your endeavours prosper'd?
Have we tired Fortune's malice with our sufferings?
Is she at length, after so many frowns,
Pleased to vouchsafe one cheerful look upon us?
"*Fran.* You give too much to fortune and your passions,
O'er which a wise man, if religious, triumphs
That name fools worship, and those tyrants, which
We arm against our better part, our reason,
May add, but never take from our afflictions.
"*Vitel.* Sir, as I am a sinful man, I cannot
But like one suffer.
"*Fran.* I exact not from you
A fortitude insensible of calamity,
To which the saints themselves have bow'd, and shown
They are made of flesh and blood; all that I challenge
Is manly patience. Will you, that were train'd up
In a religious school, where divine maxims,
Scorning comparison with moral precepts,
Were daily taught you, bear your constancy's trial,
Not like Vitelli, but a village nurse,
With curses in your mouth, tears in your eyes? —
How poorly it shows in you.
"*Vitel.* I am school'd, sir,
And will hereafter, to my utmost strength,
Study to be myself.
"*Fran.* So shall you find me
Most ready to assist you; neither have I
Slept in your great occasions. since I left you,
I have been at the viceroy's court, and press'd
As far as they allow a Christian entrance:
And something I have learn'd, that may concern
The purpose of this journey.
"*Vitel.* Dear sir, what is it?
"*Fran.* By the command of Asambeg, the viceroy,
The city swells with barbarous pomp and pride,

For the entertainment of stout Mustapha,
The basha of Aleppo, who in person
Comes to receive the niece of Amurath,
The fair Donusa for his bride.
  " *Vitel.* I find not
How this may profit us.
  " *Fran.* Pray you give me leave.
Among the rest that wait upon the viceroy,
Such as have, under him, command in Tunis,
Who, as you 've often heard, are all false pirates,
I saw the shame of Venice, and the scorn
Of all good men, the perjured RENEGADO,
Antonio Grimaldi.
  " *Vitel.* Ha! his name
Is poison to me.
  " *Fran.* Yet again?
  " *Vitel.* I have done, sir.
  " *Fran.* This debauch'd villain, whom we ever thought
(After his impious scorn done, in St. Mark's,
To me, as I stood at the holy altar)
The thief that ravish'd your fair sister from you,
The virtuous Paulina, not long since,
As I am truly given to understand,
Sold to the viceroy a fair Christian virgin;
On whom, maugre his fierce and cruel nature,
Asambeg dotes extremely.
  " *Vitel.* 'Tis my sister:
It must be she, my better angel tells me
'Tis poor Paulina. Farewell all disguises!
I'll show, in my revenge, that I am noble.
  " *Fran.* You are not mad?
  Vitel. No, sir; my virtuous anger
Makes every vein in artery; I feel in me
The strength of twenty men; and, being arm'd
With my good cause to wreak wrong'd innocence,
I dare alone run to the viceroy's court,
And with this poniard, before his face,
Dig out Grimaldi's heart.
  " *Fran.* Is this religious?
  " *Vitel.* Would you have me tame now? Can I know my sister
Mew'd up in his seraglio, and in danger
Not alone to lose her honour, but her soul;
The hell-bred villain by too, that has sold both
To black destruction, and not haste to send him
To the devil, his tutor? To be patient now,

Were, in another name, to play the pander
To the viceroy's loose embraces, and cry aim!
While he, by force or flattery, compels her
To yield her fair name up to his foul lust,
And, after, turn apostata to the faith
That she was bred in.

"*Fran.* Do but give me hearing,
And you shall soon grant how ridiculous
This childish fury is. A wise man never
Attempts impossibilities; 't is as easy
For any single arm to quell an army,
As to effect your wishes. We come hither
To learn Paulina's fate, and to redeem her:
Leave your revenge to heaven: I oft have told you
Of a relick that I gave her, which has power,
If we may credit holy men's traditions,
To keep the owner free from violence:
This on her breast she wears, and does preserve
The virtue of it, by her daily prayers.
So, if she fall not by her own consent,
Which it were sin to think, I fear no force.
Be, therefore, patient; keep this borrow'd shape,
Till time and opportunity present us
With some fit means to see her; which perform'd,
I'll join with you in any desperate course
For her delivery.

"*Vitel.* You have charm'd me, sir,
And I obey in all things: pray you, pardon
The weakness of my passion.

"*Fran.* And excuse it.
Be cheerful, man; for know that good intents
Are, in the end, crown'd with as fair events."

The character of Francisco is a noble one. "Pious, sagacious, charitable, disinterested, and without ostentation." he soon obtains a claim on our attention, His are indeed lessons of wisdom, no less than of virtue.

The next scene introduces us to *Donusa*, the beautiful niece of Amurath, who is in Tunis, to receive her lover, the basha of Aleppo. She is a true misbeliever. Though innocent in deed, she is not so in thought: she is also capricious, haughty, overbearing. She just condescends to glance at the basha kneeling at her feet; gives him, however, slight reason to hope; and in a

freak resolves to disguise herself, that she may, without observation, see all that is to be seen in Tunis. She veils herself, and, accompanied by Mustapha her lover, walks through the bazaars. She stops for a few moments at the shop of Vitelli; becomes enamoured of him when she hears him speak, wonders how so clever a fellow came to have a shop, breaks his glasses, and tells him that for payment he must come the following day to her palace. She has received Cupid's dart, and her domestics are hugely surprised at the alteration in her manner. In a soliloquy, she sighs, complains, draws a picture of her dangerous situation, but like a true Turk, concludes that she must yield because it is fate which urges her along. Her next step is to prevail on her women and her eunuch to be her confidants; and she has little difficulty with *them*: the aga and capiaga of her guards are won over with equal ease; so that when Vitelli arrives, he has only to give the password and be admitted. His object in following seems to be that he may learn something of his sister: he has no inclination, he is sure, for amorous pursuits; and confiding in his own virtue, he enters the palace. Whatever his good resolutions may have been, they dissolve into thin air; and he leaves the place more guilty than he entered it — leaves it too under a promise of returning.

In the mean time Paulina remains in the house of Asambeg. As she has refused to yield, and as he feels he has no power to force her, she is left in close custody. Yet his love knows no bounds; and he who is a tyrant every where else, is a trembling suppliant in presence of this Christian lady. In the mean time, also, Grimaldi the renegado is disgraced: he has lost all that he possessed, and he wanders in rags through the streets of Tunis. In this condition he is met by Francisco, who ventures to hope even for the repentance of this vile man. But Grimaldi has on his soul a load of guilt which he feels may send him to the lowest hell: he is in despair: —

"*Grim.* Why should I study a defence or comfort,
In whom black guilt and misery, if balanced,
I know not which would turn the scale? look upward
I dare not; for, should it but be believed
That I, died deep in hell's most horrid colours,
Should dare to hope for mercy, it would leave
No check or feeling in men innocent,
To catch at sins the devil n'er taught mankind yet.
No! I must downward, downward; though repentance
Could borrow all the glorious wings of grace,
My mountainous weight of sins would crack their pinions,
And sink them to hell with me.
"*Fran.* Dreadful! Hear me,
Thou miserable man.
"*Grim.* Good sir, deny not
But that there is no punishment beyond
Damnation."

The master and boatswain of his vessel, however, advance, and offer still to serve under his orders: but his despair will not allow him to hear them :—

"*Grim.* Serve me! I am a devil already: leave me —
Stand further off, you are blasted else! I have heard
Schoolmen affirm man's body is composed
Of the four elements; and, as in league together
They nourish life, so each of them affords
Liberty to the soul, when it grows weary
Of this fleshy prison. Which shall I make choice of?
The fire? no; I shall feel that hereafter,
The earth will not receive me. Should some whirlwind
Snatch me into the air, and I hang there,
Perpetual plagues would dwell upon the earth;
And those superior bodies, that pour down
Their cheerful influence, deny to pass it,
Through those vast regions I have infected.
The sea? ay, that is justice; there I plough'd up
Mischief as deep as hell: there, there, I 'll hide
This cursed lump of clay. May it turn rocks,
Where plummet's weight could never reach the sands,
And grind the ribs of all such barks as press
The ocean's breast in my unlawful course!
I haste then to thee; let thy ravenous womb,
Whom all things else deny, be now my tomb! [*Exit.*
"*Master.* Follow him, and restrain him. [*Exit Boatswain.*

"*Fran.* Let this stand
For an example to you. I 'll provide
A lodging for him, and apply such cures
To his wounded conscience, as heaven hath lent me.
He 's now my second care; and my profession
Binds me to teach the desperate to repent,
As far as to confirm the innocent.

By the care of the good father, Grimaldi repents. The scene in which he is reconciled to the church is full of beauty:

"*Grim.* For theft, he that restores treble the value,
Makes satisfaction; and, for want of means
To do so, as a slave must serve it out,
Till he hath made full payment. There 's hope left here
Oh! with what willingness would I give up
My liberty to those that I have pillaged;
And wish the numbers of my years, though wasted
In the most sordid slavery, might equal
The rapines I have made; till, with one voice,
My patient sufferings might exact from my
Most cruel creditors, a full remission,
An eye's loss with an eye, limb's with a limb;
A sad account! — yet to find peace within here,
Though all such as I have maim'd and dismember'd
In drunken quarrels, or o'ercome with rage,
When they were given up to my power, stood here now,
And cried for restitution, to appease them,
I would do a bloody justice on myself
Pull out these eyes, that guided me to ravish
Their sight from others; lop these legs that bore me
To barbarous violence; with this hand cut off,
This instrument of wrong, till nought were left me
But this poor bleeding limbless trunk, which gladly
I would divide among them. — Ha! what think I

"*Enter* FRANCISCO, *in a cope, like a Bishop.*

Of petty forfeitures! In this reverend habit,
All that I am turn'd into eyes, I look on
A deed of mine so fiend-like, that repentance,
Though with my tears I taught the sea new tides,
Can never wash off. all my thefts, my rapes,
Are venial trespasses, compared to what
I offered to that shape, and in a place too,
Where I stood bound to kneel to 't. [*Kneels.*

"*Fran.* 'T is forgiven:
I with his tongue, whom, in these sacred vestments,
With impure hands thou didst offend, pronounce it.
I bring peace to thee; see that thou deserve it
In thy fair life hereafter.
"*Grim.* Can it be!
Dare I believe this vision, or hope
A pardon e'er may find me?
"*Fran.* Purchase it
By zealous undertakings, and no more
'T will be remembered.
"*Grim.* What celestial balm
I feel now pour'd into my wounded conscience!
What penance is there I 'll not undergo
Though ne'er so sharp and rugged, with more pleasure
Than flesh and blood e'er tasted! shew me true Sorrow,
Arm'd with an iron whip, and I will meet
The stripes she brings along with her, as if
They were the gentle touches of a hand
That comes to cure me. Can good deeds redeem me?
I will rise up a wonder to the world,
When I have given strong proofs how I am alter'd.
I, that have sold such as profess'd the faith
That I was born in, to captivity,
Will make their number equal, that I shall
Deliver from the oar; and win as many
By the clearness of my actions, to look on
Their misbelief and loath it. I will be
A convoy for all merchants; and thought worthy
To be reported to the world, hereafter,
The child of your devotion; nurs'd up,
And made strong by your charity, to break through
All dangers hell can bring forth to oppose me:
Nor am I, though my fortunes were thought desperate,
Now you have reconciled me to myself,
So void of worldly means, but, in despite
Of the proud viceroy's wrongs I can do something
To witness of my change: when you please, try me,
And I will perfect what you shall enjoin me,
Or fall a joyful martyr.
"*Fran.* You will reap
The comfort of it; live yet undiscover'd
And with your holy meditations strengthen
Your christian resolution: ere long,
You shall hear further from me. [*Exit.*
"*Grim.* I 'll attend

All your commands with patience; — come, my mates,
I hithérto have lived an ill example,
And, as your captain, led you on to mischief;
But now will truly labour, that good men
May say hereafter of me, to my glory,
(Let but my power and means hand with my will),
His good endeavours did weigh down his ill. [*Exeunt.*

" *Re-enter* FRANCISCO, *in his usual habit.*

" *Fran.* This penitence is not counterfeit: howsoever,
Good actions are in themselves rewarded.
My travail's to meet with a double crown:
If that Vitelli come off safe, and prove
Himself the master of his wild affections."

The conversion of the renegado is introduced with great propriety; for it will be soon shown that his services are indispensable.

The intrigue of Vitelli with the fair Donusa could not escape the penetration of Francisco. His expostulations have produced their effect on the young man, who promises no more to repeat his guilt. He will see her once more to tell her so. He does see her, and he keeps his resolution. A good man may *once* fall into sin; but no good man will repeat it a second time. Yet the effort is a strong one: —

" *Vitel.* I will stop
Mine ears against these charms, which, if Ulysses
Could live again, and hear this second syren,
Though bound with cables to his mast; his ship too
Fasten'd with all her anchors, this enchantment
Would force him, in despite of all resistance,
To leap into the sea, and follow her;
Although destruction, with outstretch'd arms,
Stood ready to receive him.

" *Don.* Gentle sir,
Though you deny to hear me, yet vouchsafe
To look upon me: though I use no language,
The grief for this unkind repulse will print
Such a dumb eloquence upon my face,
As will not only plead but prevail for me.

" *Vitel.* I am a coward. I will see and hear you,
The trial, else, is nothing; nor the conquest,
My temperance shall crown me with hereafter,

Worthy to be remember'd. Up, my virtue!
And holy thoughts and resolutions arm me
Against this fierce temptation! give me voice
Tuned to a zealous anger, to express
At what an over-value I have purchased
The wanton treasure of your virgin bounties;
That, in their false fruition, heap upon me
Despair and horrour. — That I could with that ease
Redeem my forfeit innocence, or cast up
The poison I received into my entrails,
From the alluring cup of your enticements,
As now I do deliver back the price. [*Returns the jewels.*
And salary of your lust! or thus unclothe me
Of sin's gay trappings, the proud livery.
[*Throws off his cloak and doublet.*
Of wicked pleasure, which but worn and heated
With the fire of entertainment and consent,
Like to Alcides' fatal shirt, tears off
Our flesh and reputation both together,
Leaving our ulcerous follies bare and open
To all malicious censure!
" *Don.* You must grant,
If you hold that a loss to you, mine equals,
If not transcends it. If you then first tasted
That poison, as you call it, I brought with me
A palate unacquainted with the relish
Of those delights, which most, as I have heard,
Greedily swallow; and then the offence,
If my opinion may be believed,
Is not so great: howe'er, the wrong no more
Than if Hippolitus and the virgin huntress
Should meet and kiss together.
" *Vitel.* What defences
Can lust raise to maintain a precipice,
To the abyss of looseness! — but affords not
The least stair, or the fastening of one foot,
To reascend that glorious height we fell from.
" *Don.* Are you marble?
If Christians have mothers, sure they share in
The tigress' fierceness; for, if you were owner
Of human pity, you could not endure
A princess to kneel to you, or look on
These falling tears which hardest rocks would soften,
And yet remain unmoved. Did you but give me
A taste of happiness in your embraces,
That the remembrance of the sweetness of it

Might leave perpetual bitterness behind it?
Or shew'd me what it was to be a wife,
To live a widow ever?"

Here the lovers are betrayed. Asambeg the governor and Mustapha the basha rush in, commit Vitelli to prison, and place a guard over Donusa until the will of her uncle Amurath can be known. By the Koran, both he and she have merited death; bnt as she is of high lineage, — of Ottoman's imperial race — the sultan only can pronounce her fate. A vassal is sent to hear his pleasure, and soon returns with the warrant for her death. The chiefs meet in divan; Donusa is brought before them in black; she endeavours to move their pity; in vain, she may as well speak to rocks; she upbraids them with usurping a privilege denied to her sex: *they* may have female slaves of all religions; but if a Mahommedan maiden sin with one of a different faith, her crime forsooth is capital. There is no hope for her unless the accomplice of her guilt will marry her. Massinger is here true to the fact: the Koran has indeed a provision to this effect; declaring that if the female can win an unbelieving soul to the faith of Islam, her guilt is cancelled. She snatches at the condition; she demands to see Vitelli, and is conducted to his prison. Asambeg and Mustapha are present; so also is Paulina, to whom her keeper has recently granted much more liberty, in the hope that indulgence may effect what severity has attempted in vain. Donusa approaches, not doubting that Francisco will accept the condition, even with joy. She kneels: —

"*Don.* My suit is,
That you would quit your shoulders of a burthen,
Under whose ponderous weight you wilfully
Have too long groan'd, to cast those fetters off,
With which, with your own hands, you chain your freedom.
Forsake a severe, nay, imperious mistress,
Whose service does exact perpetual cares,
Watchings and troubles; and give entertainment
To one that courts you, whose least favours are

Variety, and choice of all delights
Mankind is capable of.
"*Vitel.* You speak in riddles.
What burthen, or what mistress, or what fetters,
Are those you point at?
"*Don.* Those which your religion,
The mistress you too long have served, compels you
To bear with slave-like patience.
"*Vitel.* Ha!
"*Paul.* How bravely
That virtuous anger shews!
"*Don* Be wise, and weigh
The prosperous success of things; if blessings
Are donatives from heaven, (which, you must grant,
Were blasphemy to question,) and that
They are call'd down and pour'd on such as are
Most gracious with the great Disposer of them,
Look on our flourishing empire, if the splendour,
The majesty, and glory of it dim not
Your feeble sight; and then turn back, and see
The narrow bounds of yours, yet that poor remnant
Rent in as many factions and opinions
As you have petty kingdoms; — and then, if
You are not obstinate against truth and reason,
You must confess the Deity you worship
Wants care or power to help you.
"*Paul.* Hold out now,
And then thou art victorious.
"*Asam.* How he eyes her!
"*Musta.* As if he would look through her.
"*Asam.* His eyes flame too,
As threatening violence.
"*Vitel.* But that I know
The devil thy tutor, fills each part about thee,
And that I cannot play the exorcist
To dispossess thee, unless I should tear
Thy body limb by limb, and throw it to
The Furies, that expect it; I would now
Pluck out that wicked tongue, that hath blasphemed
The great Omnipotence, at whose nod
The fabrick of the world shakes. Dare you bring
Your juggling prophet in comparison with
That most inscrutable and infinite Essence,
That made this All, and comprehends his work! —
The place is too profane to mention him
Whose only name is sacred. O Donusa!

How much, in my compassion, I suffer,
That thou, on whom this most excelling form,
And faculties of discourse, beyond a woman,
Were by his liberal gift conferr'd, shouldst still
Remain in ignorance of him that gave it!
I will not foul my mouth to speak the sorceries
Of your seducer, his base birth, his whoredoms,
His strange impostures; nor deliver how
He taught a pigeon to feed in his ear;
Then made his credulous followers believe
It was an angel, that instructed him
In the framing of his Alcoran — pray you, mark me.
"*Asam.* These words are death, were he in nought else guilty.
"*Vitel.* Your intent to win me
To be of your belief, proceeded from
Your fear to die. Can there be strength in that
Religion, that suffers us to tremble
At that which every day, nay hour, we haste to?
"*Don.* This is unanswerable, and there's something tells me
I err in my opinion.
"*Vitel.* Cherish it,
It is a heavenly prompter; entertain
This holy motion, and wear on your forehead
The sacred badge he arms his servants with;
You shall, like me, with scorn look down upon
All engines tyranny can advance to batter
Your constant resolution. Then you shall
Look truly fair, when your mind's pureness answers
Your outward beauties.
"*Don.* I came here to take you,
But I perceive a yielding in myself
To be your prisoner.
"*Vitel.* 'T is an overthrow,
That will outshine all victories. O Donusa,
Die in my faith like me; and 't is a marriage
At which celestial angels shall be waiters,
And such as have been sainted welcome us.
Ars you confirmed?
"*Don.* I would be; but the means
That may assure me?
"*Vitel.* Heaven is merciful,
And will not suffer you to want a man
To do that sacred office, build upon it.
"*Don.* Then thus I spit at Mahomet.
"*Asam.* Stop her mouth:
In death to turn apostate! I'll not hear

One syllable from any; — wretched creature!
With the next rising sun prepare to die.
Yet, Christian, in reward of thy brave courage,
Be thy faith right or wrong, receive this favour;
In person I'll attend thee to thy death:
And boldly challenge all that I can give,
But what's not in my grant, which is — to live. [*Exeunt.*"

This scene is well described: it is in the best style of Massinger.

Strong in his resolution, and overjoyed that he has been instrumental in the conversion of Donusa, Vitelli is anxious that the baptismal rite should be administered. But the confessor will not be permitted to approach her; can then a layman administers it?

"*Fran.* A question in itself with much ease answer'd:
Midwives, upon necessity, perform it;
And knights that, in the Holy Land, fought for
The freedom of Jerusalem, when full
Of sweat and enemies' blood, have made their helmets
The fount, out of which with their holy hands
They drew that heavenly liquor 't was approved then
By the holy church, nor must I think it now,
In you a work less pious."

In this passage we have presumption, we think, that Massinger was no catholic. Had he been one, he would not have made Vitelli, much less Francisco, uneasy about the administration of the rite to Donusa. He must have known that there were two kinds of baptism — the one of water, the other of blood; that this latter baptism was martyrdom, which rendered the former one unnecessary.* Another reason for the negative may be given. In a previous scene, Francisco is represented "in a cope like a bishop" Now, Francisco was a jesuit; he therefore could never be a bishop; nor could he put on an episcopal garment without violating the canons. And while on this subject, we may advert to two other

* Since the above was written, we find that Dr. Ireland, dean of Westminster, has in the last volume of Gifford's Massinger, noticed this point. He does not, however, draw the same inference from it that we do.

circumstances which did not strike us in a former paragraph*, yet which strongly confirm the view we have taken, that Massinger was not a catholic. In *The Maid of Honour*, he makes *Gonzaga*, a knight of Malta, tear off the cross from a brother knight who had violated his vows, *Bertaldo*. Now Gonzaga could do no such thing; not even the grand master of the order could have done it: degradation could be inflicted only in a solemn chapter. Again, he subsequently restores the cross: this he was as little authorised to do as he was to remove it; and we cannot believe that a catholic could be so ignorant of what is known to so many protestants, as to make Gonzaga do either. But we have a stronger proof than any of them, that our author was not of this church. In the same drama (*The Maid of Honour*) he makes *Paulo*, a friar, cut off the hair of *Camiola*, and receive her vows as a nun, in the palace of the Sicilian king. No catholic *could* blunder so outrageously. It is the bishop only that can administer the irrevocable vow; it can be administered after a long novitiate, the place must not be a regal apartment, but the altar; and the company assembled must not consist of courtiers only, but of the nuns belonging to the community into which she is admitted. Hereafter we shall hear no more of Massinger's being a catholic.

But to proceed with the plot. Francisco has planned with the renegado and the crew of the vessel, the escape of Vitelli, Paulina, and Donusa. The chance, however, seems hopeless: Vitelli and Donusa are brought out to execution; and all that the former can obtain is a few minutes' respite until he has thrown the water of baptism on the face of his convert. The effect of this sacrament is represented as miraculous: —

" *Don.* I am another woman; — till this minute
I never lived, nor durst think how to die.
How long have I been blind! yet on the sudden,
By this blest means, I feel the films of errour
Ta'en from my soul's eyes. O divine physician!
That hast bestow'd a sight on me, which Death

* See before, p. 265.

Though ready to embrace me in his arms,
Cannot take from me: let me kiss the hand
That did this miracle, and seal my thanks
Upon those lips from whence these sweet words vanish'd,
That freed me from the cruellest of prisons,
Blind ignorance and misbelief. False prophet!
Impostor Mahomet! —
"*Asam.* I'll hear no more,
You do abuse my favours; sever them:
Wretch, if thou hadst another life to lose,
This blasphemy deserved it; — instantly
Carry them to their deaths.
"*Vitel.* We part now, blest one,
To meet hereafter in a kingdom, where
Hell's malice shall not reach us."

The catastrophe is suspended a few hours at the entreaty of Paulina. She pretends to yield; that she will become the wife of Asambeg; and requests as a favour that she may have the guard of Donusa, for whom she expresses much aversion. When he asks her reason for the delay, she replies —

"*Paul.* That I may
Have time to triumph o'er this wretched woman.
I'll be myself her guardian; I will feast,
Adorned in her choice and richest jewels:
Commit him to what guards you please. Grant this,
I am no more mine own, but yours.
"*Asam.* Enjoy it;
Repine at it who dares; bear him safe off
To the black tower, but give him all things useful:
The contrary was not in your request?
"*Paul.* I do contemn him.
"*Don.* Peace in death denied me!
"*Paul.* Thou shalt not go in liberty to thy grave;
For one night a sultana is my slave.
"*Musta.* A terrible little tyranness.
"*Asam.* No more;
Her will shall be a law. Till now ne'er happy!"

Her object may easily be conjectured: she will escape with Donusa to the ship in waiting for them. But she will also attempt the release of her brother. A slave is sent with a baked pie, containing a written paper to the prisoner: —

"*Enter* VITELLI *with the baked meat.*

"*Vitel.* There's something more in this than means to cloy
A hungry appetite, which I must discover.
She will'd me search the midst: thus, thus I pierce it.
— Ha! what is this? a scroll bound up in pack-thread!
What may the mystery be? [*Reads.*

Son, let down this packthread at this west window of the castle. By it you shall draw up a ladder of ropes, by which you may descend, your dearest Donusa with the rest of your friends below attend you. Heaven prosper you! FRANCISCO.

O best of men! he that gives up himself
To a true religious friend, leans not upon
A false deceiving reed, but boldly builds
Upon a rock; which now with joy I find
In reverend Francisco, whose good vows,
Labours, and watchings, in my hoped-for freedom,
Appear a pious miracle. I come,
I come with confidence; though the descent
Were steep as hell, I know I cannot slide,
Being call'd down by such a faithful guide. [*Exit.*"

Thus the escape is effected, and the easy Asambeg is left to rage.

On this play we shall make no further comment: it would be useless.

Into the other productions of Massinger, we cannot enter: in a few words we may characterise some of them. — *The Picture* is one of his most popular dramas. It does not, however, please us so well as the rest. It has no probability; nay, it has impossibilities which completely destroy the illusion. — Nor can we join in the high commendation passed on *The Fatal Dowry*. It is improbable: it has no foundation in French manners (the scene is laid at Dijon), or in human nature. The plot is one of the worst that could be devised. The characters, however, are well drawn; and there are some fine passages to redeem the faults of the piece. — *The Emperor of the East* has also a bad plot; but the characters are well conceived; and the sentiments are equal to the language. — *The Roman Actor* has merit; but it is much less pleasing than most of our author's dramas. It aims at too much; and it fails. — *The*

Great Duke of Florence is a drama of considerable power. The characters are good; the style is admirable, neither rising to bombast, nor descending to vulgarity; and though the plot is defective, the piece will always be read with great pleasure.—*A New Way to pay Old Debts* has been rendered familiar to the public by the late Mr. Kean, whose personation of *Sir Giles Overreach* was one of his most splendid efforts. "No play of Massinger," says Dr. Ireland, "is marked with more variety or seriousness of moral." This is true. The characters are admirably drawn; the incidents are striking; the versification vigorous and elegant.—The comedy of *The City Madam* has, we think, been more praised than it deserves to be. The moral is good; but the characters are too coarsely drawn: at least, if London had such men and women once, we may well rejoice that there is a change for the better. The incidents are sometimes unnatural, sometimes vicious; and there is a disgusting tone of profligacy in some of the scenes. To this drama Hogarth is supposed to be indebted for a few of his graphic descriptions.—*The Guardian* is far below the usual manner of this author. It seems to have been composed for popularity merely, or rather to please a vicious taste. The plot is wild, improbable; and the characters are not drawn with his usual discrimination. Yet it has scattered beauties of no ordinary value.—*A Very Woman* is one of the most agreeable dramas of Massinger.—*The Bashful Lover* is inferior to it; yet there is great judgment in the delineation of its characters; and the incidents, though not very critically united, are striking.—*The Parliament of Love* is but a fragment: it is, however, a highly poetical one. It relates to the period when minstrels and poets, when lords and knights, courted the fair with all the ardour of chivalry. But the poetry will scarcely atone for the lack of incident, and the mutilated condition of the piece. It is a picture rather than a drama.

Massinger died in March, 1640. The event was sudden: he went to bed in good health, and in the

morning was found a corpse. He was attended to the grave in St. Mary Overy's church by the comedians. No stone, or memorial of any kind, marks the spot where his dust is deposited. In some of his doggrel lines, sir Aston Cockayne tells us that he and Fletcher were laid in the same grave; and this is probably the fact. Strange that, of a man so eminent for his genius, so little should be known! He appears to have had no wife, no children, no relative, no friend to close his eyes. "Even the memorial of his mortality," observes Mr. Gifford, "is given with a pathetic brevity, which accords but too well with the obscure and humble passages of his life: 'March 20. 1639, 1640, buried Philip Massinger, — A STRANGER!'" After his death, however, according to the manners of the age, commendatory verses enough were penned in his memory. His virtues are more celebrated than those of his predecessors; and there is reason to believe that he held them in a higher degree than any of his brother poets. There is, indeed, some grossness in his allusions; but that was peculiar to the age; no play was liked that did not contain it; and he had to choose between complying with the universal practice and retiring from the profession. This, however, is no apology: he *might* have refrained from indecent and immodest expressions; and, if driven from the stage, far more honourable would it have been for him to seek a subsistence in some other way, than to gratify a vicious appetite. All that can be said in palliation is, that he was less licentious than his fellows.

Massinger had correct notions of liberty. He does not inculcate the slavish doctrine so common in our old dramatists, — of passive obedience to kings. He acknowledges no divine right in the *person*, though he reverences the *dignity*. He does not praise suicide. He does not apologise for guilt of any kind. On the contrary, he is careful to apportion punishment to every violation of moral duty. But his great, his glorious

distinction, as Mr. Gifford well observes, "is the uniform respect with which he treats religion and its ministers, in an age when it was found necessary to add regulation to regulation to stop the growth of impiety on the stage No priests are introduced by him 'to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh at their licentious follies: the sacred name is not lightly invoked, nor daringly sported with; nor is Scripture profaned by buffoon allusions lavishly put into the mouths of fools and women." This is, indeed, "a glorious distinction," — alas! that it should be any distinction at all. But our old stage is grossly licentious. From Shakespear, that "Coryphæus of profanation," to Dryden and Congreve, there were immorality and impiety.

But the *literary* character of Massinger must not be dismissed without some general observations.

"It is truly surprising," says Dr. Ireland, "that the genius which produced these plays should have obtained so little notice from the world. It does not appear that, in any age since his own, Massinger has been ranked among the principal writers for the stage. Rarely have any of his dramas been acted; and dramatic criticism has been unwilling to mention his name. It has attributed variety and greatness of character to Shakespear and Fletcher, as if Massinger had never existed." Yet, in many of the qualities necessary to constitute dramatic eminence, he is on a level with either. 1. His style is natural, yet elegant; it is easy, clear, flowing, and unaffected. Its great beauty, indeed, is perspicuity; he does not rise into bombast; but he does sometimes descend lower than he ought. 2. If his plots are sometimes intricate, they are always connected; circumstances apparently of trifling import, are made the hinges of important events. 3. And he observes the unities more than the writers of his age, Ben Jonson and one or two more excepted. Of these, unity of action is always essential. He has rarely under-plots; and when he has, they are so skilfully allied with the

pervading one, as not to affect the simplicity and clearness of the action. Sometimes, indeed, he has too much incident; and this hurries the piece so much that we have not leisure enough to dwell on the delineation of character. In regard to the second unity, that of *place*, he does not always observe it, and for this he has our thanks. He removes the scene from Cæsarea to Rome, from Sicily to Sienna, according to his pleasure. In general, he restricts it to one city, however frequently he may change it from house to house. The third unity, that of *time*, he regards still less. In some of his dramas, years seem to elapse. 4. Of his *learning*, we can only say that it was respectable. He has many classical allusions, but these he sometimes applies with little judgment. They are proper enough in the mouth of Dorothea, the Virgin-Martyr, when she wishes to convict her pagan antagonists of folly in their monstrous creed; but they are sadly misplaced in the mouths of women and servants. He seems to have read the early fathers, or at least so much of ecclesiastical history as to be conversant with their spirit. Nor was he ignorant of general history. But he was far more conversant with the traditionary lore of the middle ages. He had read the romance of France and Italy with great attention. His plots are often founded on them. 5. Of his *morals* we say, as we have already said, that though he has many indecent expressions, many allusions still more so, he is generally ready to visit guilt with retribution. This is one of his distinguishing characteristics. Let us not, however, forget to condemn him for the obscenity of some among his dialogues. He had, indeed, no liking to it; he writes as if he were undergoing a painful necessity; as if he felt that, if he would have his dramas popular, he must sacrifice to the mob. For this reason, there is, we are glad to perceive, something very lifeless in such descriptions: they have no charm, they can have none, for the most prurient mind. He has not laboured to render vice attractive, and therefore he has not succeeded. In this, he is unlike most of

his contemporaries. Beaumont, the son of a judge, Fletcher, the son of a bishop, were far more licentious. 6. His *characters* are delineated, not, indeed, with the master hand of Jonson, but with considerable felicity. They are, however, more true to nature than those of his celebrated contemporary. He drew more from history or from real life; and he has, consequently, exhibited portraits, less striking, indeed, but far more just. 7. In poetic fancy, he is not equal to Beaumont, or Fletcher, or Ford; but he is superior to Ben Jonson. He writes with too much ease to be studious about words; and he seldom allows a metaphor to carry him beyond the bounds of sobriety. 8. Of *sublimity* he has little. He did not, however, aim at it. 9. Nor can we say that he has great power over the passions. He inspires pity, indeed, but seldom terror; and he does not draw tears. Still he rivets the attention, both, by the striking nature of his incidents, and by the animation of his dialogue. 10. Of *wit* he has absolutely none. Hence he was unfitted for comedy. On the whole, we may say of him, with Dr. Ireland, that "he does not soar to the heights of fancy: he dwells among men, and describes their business and their passions with judgment, feeling, and discrimination. He has a justness of principle which is admirably fitted to the best interests of human life."

. Massinger was removed in time from the sphere of life. The theatres were closed soon after his death. The puritans were becoming all powerful; and they bore nearly as much hatred to the stage as to monarchy and the church. They felt, too, the ridicule which during half a century had been poured upon them by the best dramatic writers; and they were not disposed, now that the means were in their hands, to forego their revenge. Yet we know not that the stage was regarded with favour by moderate virtuous men who were not puritans. To them, the licentiousness which stained, the buffoonery which degraded it, rendered it odious; and they rejoiced, no doubt, in its destruction. Unhappily,

however, it was not purified by adversity: after the restoration of Charles II. it was still more vicious.

It is often contended, that the unbridled licence of our old stage was owing to the lingering spirit of the Roman catholic religion,-- a spirit, we are told, favourable to such licence. This is erroneous. The very contrary is the fact. So long as that religion was the dominant one, there was none of the pollution so common in later times. Its spirit was not departed during the greater part of Elizabeth's reign; and during that period we find the stage comparatively free from immorality. Shakespear, we are sorry to say, was one of the first writers to make obscenity agreeable, and he was but too well imitated by others. In fact, the Roman catholic church has always discountenanced the theatre. At this day, no performer can be admitted to her sacraments, or buried, we believe, in consecrated ground; at least, if he be, the service of the dead is not read over him.

Connected with the age of Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger, and necessary to elucidate it, is some account of the life and writings of

*John Ford.**

(1586— †.)

Nothing in the whole compass of biography equals the dearth of materials in regard to our ancient dramatists. Of Shakespear, it has been well observed, we know little more than that he was born at Stratford, that he came to London, wrote plays, returned to Strat-

* The materials for this scanty life are derived from Baker's Biography Dramatica; Dodsley's Old Plays; Malone's Shakespear, by Boswell; Campbell's Specimens of the British Poets; Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary, Weber's Ford, and, above all, the Introduction to Ford, by Gifford.

† The time of Ford's death cannot be discovered; probably it was about the year 1650.

ford, and died. Ben Jonson's life is full of uncertainty. Of Beaumont and Fletcher we know nothing beyond a few scanty dates. Of Massinger we can speak only as far as his dedications and a few entries enable us. Of John Ford, we have, if possible, still less to say. How came the world to be so indifferent to men whose genius all must acknowledge, as not even to make the least inquiry about them, until inquiry was too late? The reason, — or at least *a* reason, must be, as Dr. Farmer observes, that play-writing was scarcely thought a creditable employ. Dramatists were little more esteemed than players: both were witty vagabonds, who might occasionally be permitted to make a wise man laugh, but concerning whom, the moment the curtain fell, no man, wise or silly, would waste one word. As well ask the exhibiter in the streets, while delighting children and nursery-maids with the tricks of Punch and Judy, who made his puppets, and what obscure alley in this vast Babylon had the honour to produce him.

The family of Ford was of high respectability in Devonshire, where it had been long seated in the sixteenth century. Thomas Ford, of Ilsington, married the daughter of the well-known lord chief justice Popham, and had issue our poet John Ford, with other children. John was the second son, and was born at Ilsington in 1586. His elder brother was, no doubt, sufficiently provided for without the necessity of a profession. *He* was obliged to choose one; and his mother's connections probably inclined him to the law. Whether he went to college, we know not; but, in 1602, he became a member of the Middle Temple. He had, indeed, the best prospects of success in a career of which his grandfather was the head. Whether, however, he was fond of so dry a study as the law, may be doubted. Probably he was placed in some sinecure post where few qualifications of this kind were required. It is certain that he soon gave up much of his time to poetry. In 1606, four years after his entrance, when only in his twentieth year, he produced *Fame's Memo-*

rial, or the Earl of Devonshire deceased. This was an elegiac poem, which he dictated to the widowed countess. This earl of Devonshire had fallen under the displeasure of the court, and even of the people; but *why*, is not very clear. He had filled several offices, especially that of viceroy of Ireland, with great credit to himself. The reason usually assigned is, that he married a lady who had long been separated—perhaps divorced—from her husband, and with whom he had long cohabited. The truth is, that the law of England did not recognise divorce, except *a mensâ et thoro*, not *a vinculo matrimonii*. Here seems to have been the earl's offence: James never forgave him, but told him that "he had purchased a fair woman with a black soul." Strange, however, that, so long as he lived in adultery with this woman, both he and she were well received at court; and that the moment he married her, he was disgraced. He did not long survive the misfortune;—he died in a few months after his marriage. But how came Ford to write an elegy to his memory? still more, how came he to dedicate it, in the highest terms of respect, to the universally contemned widow? Probably it was gratitude for some favour conferred or intended. He did not know the countess; but he speaks of the "particular grief" which the earl's death had occasioned him. What caused the particular or private grief, we need not inquire. It is strange that a man who, during so many years, had lived in adultery, should be called "a perfect saint," as he is in this elegy, and that no doubt should be entertained by the fact of his having ascended to heaven:

"Sleep still in rest! Howe'er thy bones enshrine,
Victorious lord, must peace attend thy grave!
Mount thy best part with angel's wings divine
About the throne of Jove, in quires to crave
By madrigals the joys that thou would'st have!
So ever shall, while dates of times remain,
The heavens thy soul, the earth thy fame, contain."

Heaven, we fear, was very easily awarded to the great

in that age; for many of the greatest monsters it produced — and never were there any greater than in the reigns of the Tudors and the first Stuart — received, after their deaths, a homage little inferior to an apotheosis. To be sure, all this praise was written "for a consideration;" the heir was expected to pay for "the miserable dole of consolation." Ford, however, declares that his muse was unpaid; and it deserved to be so. Who on earth *could* be expected to pay for such precious trash as the following?

'Life? ah, no life, but ever extinguish'd tapers!
Tapers? no tapers, but a burnt out light!
Light? ah, no light, but exhalation's vapours!
Vapours? no vapours, but ill-blinded sight!
Sight? ah, no sight, but hell's eternal night!
    A night? no night, but picture of an elf!
    An elf? no elf, but very death itself!"

After this specimen, the reader, we suspect, will wish to hear no more of *Fame's Memorial.*

The year when Ford became connected with the stage has not yet been discovered. The first of his acknowledged dramas, *The Lover's Melancholy*, was not printed until 1629; and it was acted, for the first time, the year before. How, then, had he been occupied from 1606 to 1628? If this was, as he himself asserted, "the first piece (drama) that ever courted reader," he certainly had written for the stage, though in connection with other dramatists. We know that he had assisted Decker in two dramas*, and Webster in one.† Besides these, he had a hand in the composition of seven other pieces. It is therefore apparent that, when *The Lover's Melancholy* appeared, he was far from a novice in dramatic composition.

The Lover's Melancholy does not, in our opinion, deserve the praise it has obtained. Poetry it has, and poetry, too, of a higher order than we find in plays generally; but it has no more impress of real life, than

* The Fairy Knight, and The Bristowe Merchant.
† A late Murder of the Son upon the Mother.

one of Virgil's pastorals. There is much grace, much sweetness, much true simplicity, in the sentiments and dialogue. We do not, however, like two recent critics, think that there is much pathos in it. The sorrows are too unreal, the expression too artificial, to move our pity. As a piece of *art*—for such it merely is—this drama will be long admired.

Four years elapsed after the representation of this piece before Ford gave any thing more to the world. Fortunately, his pecuniary circumstances were too easy to render literary composition necessary. This was to him a great advantage. Not compelled, like the rest, to produce a given quantity in a given time, he could take his own leisure to finish his pieces. *'T is Pity She's a Whore* is a fantastic and indelicate title: very easily might he have substituted a better one (indeed he could not have found a worse); but, provided our old writers could hit upon something *striking*, they little troubled themselves about its delicacy. The plot, which is a dreadful one, is derived from an Italian source: some of the particulars are said to be derived from a French tale by Rossell; but, if so, the tale itself is of another region: the names, the allusions, above all, the spirit, are Italian. Why Ford chose such a plot, would be vain to inquire, unless it were to gratify the taste of an audience eager for the horrible. He could not have chosen one less suited to his own powers, which are those of description, not of passion. Our notice of it must be brief.

The scene opens with a confession from *Giovanni*, who is deeply in love with his own sister, to *Bonaventura*, a friar and his ghostly father. It is in the cell of the latter that the dreadful confession is made. Ford ought to have known that this ordinance of the Roman catholic church is, in catholic countries, always celebrated in the cathedral, unless sickness, or absence from the customary place, render this impossible. Giovanni would not have been permitted to enter the cell of any monk; but this is only one out of many instances that

might be adduced of the general ignorance of our ancestors respecting matters which lay beyond their daily experience. But, waiving this objection, the event on which the whole plot turns, is well described in the opening scene:—

"*Friar.* Dispute no more in this; for know, young man,
These are no school points; nice philosophy
May tolerate unlikely arguments,
But Heaven admits no jest: wits that presumed
On wit too much, by striving how to prove
There was no God, with foolish grounds of art,
Discover'd first the nearest way to hell;
And fill'd the world with devilish atheism.
Such questions, youth, are fond: far better 't is
To bless the sun, than reason why it shines;
Yet he thou talk'st of, is above the sun.—
No more! I may not hear it.
"*Gio.* Gentle father,
To you I have unclasp'd my burden'd soul,
Emptied the storehouse of my thoughts and heart,
Made myself poor of secrets; have not left
Another word untold, which hath not spoke
All what I ever durst, or think, or know;
And yet is here the comfort I shall have?
Must I not do what all men else may, — love?
"*Friar.* Yes, you may love, fair son.
"*Gio.* Must I not praise
That beauty, which, if fram'd anew, the gods
Would make a god of, if they had it there;
And kneel to it, as I do kneel to them?
"*Friar.* Why, foolish madman!—
"*Gio.* Shall a peevish sound,
A customary form, from man to man,
Of brother and of sister, be a bar
'Twixt my perpetual happiness and me?
Say that we had one father, say one womb
(Curse to my joys!) gave both us life and birth;
Are we not, therefore, each to other bound
So much the more by nature? by the links
Of blood, of reason? nay, if you will have it,
Even of religion, to be ever one,
One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all?
"*Friar.* Have done, unhappy youth! for thou art lost.
"*Gio.* Shall, then, for that I am her brother born,
My joys be ever banished from her bed?

No, father; in your eyes I see the change
Of pity and compassion; from your age,
As from a sacred oracle, distils
The life of counsel: tell me, holy man,
What cure shall give me ease in these extremes?
"*Friar.* Repentance, son, and sorrow for this sin:
For thou hast mov'd a Majesty above,
With thy unranged (almost) blasphemy.
"*Gio.* O do not speak of that, dear confessor.
"*Friar.* Art thou, my son, that miracle of wit,
Who once, within these three months, wert esteem'd
A wonder of thine age, throughout Bononia?
How did the university applaud
Thy government, behaviour, learning, speech,
Sweetness, and all that could make up a man!
I was proud of my tutelage, and chose
Rather to leave my books, than part with thee;
I did so: — but the fruits of all my hopes
Are lost in thee, as thou art in thyself.
O Giovanni! hast thou left the schools
Of knowledge, to converse with lust and death?
For death waits on thy lust. Look through the world,
And thou shalt see a thousand faces shine
More glorious than this idol thou ador'st:
Leave her, and take thy choice, 't is much less sin;
Though in such games as those, they lose that win.
"*Gio.* It were more ease to stop the ocean
From floats and ebbs, than to dissuade my vows.
"*Friar.* Then I have done, and in thy wilful flames
Already see thy ruin, Heaven is just.—
Yet hear my counsel.
"*Gio.* As a voice of life.
"*Friar.* Hie to thy father's house, there lock thee fast
Alone within thy chamber; then fall down
On both thy knees, and grovel on the ground:
Cry to thy heart; wash every word thou utter'st
In tears (and if 't be possible) of blood:
Beg Heaven to cleanse the leprosy of lust
That rots thy soul; acknowledge what thou art,
A wretch, a worm, a nothing; weep, sigh, pray
Three times a-day, and three times every night:
For seven days' space do this; then, if thou find'st
No change in thy desires, return to me;
I'll think on remedy. Pray for thyself
At home, whilst I pray for thee here. — Away!
My blessing with thee! we have need to pray.
"*Gio.* All this I'll do, to free me from the rod
Of vengeance; else I'll swear my fate 's my god."

This is a beautiful scene, considered apart from the moral depravity it involves. The glowing diction, the harmonious versification, cannot easily be equalled. It required, indeed, no little excellence of composition to make us bear the hideous aspect of the fact. The friar is much too gentle: we become angry with him for his criminal indulgence. The whole, however, is unnatural: no man with such a passion would ever have approached the tribunal of penance; and if he had dared to do so, he would quickly have been spurned from it.

Giovanni, as may be inferred from his licentious conceptions, makes little effort to overcome his passion. Unfortunately for him, his sister, *Annabella*, is as fond of him as he is of her, though neither has betrayed the dreadful secret to the other. This is most unnatural: assuredly there never was an instance in any Christian country where this double guilt was simultaneously committed. Opportunity for explanation is sought by both, and Annabella falls. We cannot advert to any part of this disgusting scene; but we may cite another where Giovanni again visits the friar's cell:—

"*Friar.* Peace! thou hast told a tale, whose every word
Threatens eternal slaughter to the soul;
I'm sorry I have heard it: would mine ears
Had been one minute deaf, before the hour
That thou cam'st to me! O young man, cast away,
By the religious number of mine order,
I day and night have wak'd my aged eyes
Above my strength, to weep on thy behalf.
But Heaven is angry, and be thou resolv'd,
Thou art a man remark'd to taste a mischief.
Look for 't, though it come late, it will come sure.
"*Gio.* Father, in this you are uncharitable;
What I have done, I'll prove both fit and good.
It is a principle which you have taught,
When I was yet your scholar, that the frame
And composition of the mind doth follow
The frame and composition of [the] body:
So, where the body's furniture is *beauty*,
The mind's must needs be *virtue*; which allow'd,
Virtue itself is reason but refined,

And love the quintessence of that: this proves
My sister's beauty, being rarely fair,
Is rarely virtuous; chiefly in her love,
And chiefly, in that love, her love to me:
If her's to me, then so is mine to her;
Since in like causes are effects alike.

"*Friar*. O ignorance in knowledge! long ago,
How often have I warn'd thee this before?
Indeed, if we were sure there were no Deity,
Nor heaven nor hell; then to be led alone
By nature's light (as were philosophers
Of elder times) might instance some defence.
But 't is not so: then, madman, thou wilt find,
That nature is in Heaven's positions blind.

"*Gio.* Your age o'errules you; had you youth like mine,
You 'd make her love your heaven, and her divine.

"*Friar*. Nay, then I see thou 'rt too far sold to hell:
It lies not in the compass of my prayers
To call thee back, yet let me counsel thee;
Persuade thy sister to some marriage."

Giovanni here shows himself the infidel in earnest. He has thrown off all the restraints of the moral, all those of the divine, law; and he now seeks to justify his guilt. This is the invariable progress of vice. Our passions first inflame us; their gratification is desired; perverted reason can soon excuse the meditated act, however guilty; conscience sleeps, and the deed is done. As every man wishes to be at peace with himself, ingenuity is more active in devising excuses *after* the crime than before it; the reason is perverted, just as much as the moral sense is blunted; and faith in things disagreeable is at length, if not openly derided, cast to the winds. Hence infidelity is both the cause and the effect of vice; and, by sophistry the most illusive, the conscience is often lulled until affliction, or perhaps the death-bed, awaken it with a rude shock.

The consequences of this connection are soon known to the parties. Marriage only can save her; and, mortifying as the condition is to Giovanni, he is forced to submit. At first, however, she is as repugnant as he can be to assume the new bond; and it requires all the denunciations of the friar to force her consent: —

"*Friar.* I am glad to see this penance; for, believe me,
You have unripp'd a soul so foul and guilty,
As I must tell you true, I marvel how
The earth hath borne you up; but weep, weep on,
These tears may do you good; weep faster yet,
Whilst I do read a lecture.

"*Ann.* Wretched creature!

"*Friar.* Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched,
Almost condemn'd alive. There is a place,
List, daughter! in a black and hollow vault,
Where day is never seen; there shines no sun,
But flaming horror of consuming fires,
A lightless sulphur, choak'd with smoky fogs
Of an infected darkness: in this place
Dwell many thousand thousand sundry sorts
Of never-dying deaths: there damned souls
Roar without pity; there are gluttons fed
With toads and adders; there is burning oil
Pour'd down the drunkard's throat; the usurer
Is forced to sup whole draughts of molten gold;
There is the murderer for ever stabb'd,
Yet can he never die; there lies the wanton
On racks of burning steel, whilst in his soul
He feels the torment of his raging lust.—

"*Ann.* Mercy! oh mercy!

"*Friar.* There stand these wretched things,
Who have dream'd out whole years in lawless sheets
And secret incests, cursing one another:
Then you will wish each kiss your brother gave,
Had been a dagger's point; then you shall hear
How he will cry, "Oh, would my wicked sister
Had first been damn'd, when she did yield to lust!"—
But soft, methinks I see repentance work
New motions in your heart; say, how is 't with you?

"*Ann.* Is there no way left to redeem my miseries?

"*Friar.* There is, despair not; Heaven is merciful,
And offers grace even now. 'T is thus agreed:
First, for your honour's safety, that you marry
My lord Soranzo; next, to save your soul,
Leave off this life, and henceforth live to him.

"*Ann.* Ah me!

"*Friar.* Sigh not; I know the baits of sin
Are hard to leave; oh, 't is a death to do 't.
Remember what must come: are you content?

"*Ann.* I am.

"*Friar.* I like it well; we 'll take the time.
Who 's near us there?"

Here, again, is an impropriety: the confession takes place in an apartment of her father's house, — a thing never permitted, unless in sickness. There is, however, considerable vigour in the description of the torments reserved for the impenitently wicked.

The marriage is solemnised; but Soranzo, the husband, immediately detects the pregnancy of Annabella. At first he is about to kill her, but a little reflection convinces him that it will be more worthy of an Italian to discover her lover, and be revenged on both at the same time. He is not long before he learns who the delinquent is; and he takes his measures accordingly. His birth-day is at hand: that occasion he has always been accustomed to celebrate with some pomp: he will now have more friends than ever; and Giovanni, with the father of both the guilty parties, is to be among them. He has made arrangements, too, with some disguised banditti, to be in waiting on the evening of the day; and to act on a signal being given. The day arrives, the guests are assembled, but Annabella has not yet descended; her brother goes to her in her bed-room, finds her richly drest, and begins to jest with her:—

"*Ann.* Why should you jest
At my calamity, without all sense
Of the approaching dangers you are in?
"*Gio.* What danger 's half so great as thy revolt?
Thou art a faithless sister, else thou know'st,
Malice, or any treachery beside,
Would stoop to my bent brows; why, I hold fate
Clasp'd in my fist, and could command the course
Of time's eternal motion, hadst thou been
One thought more steady than an ebbing sea.
And what? you 'll now be honest, that 's resolved?
"*Ann.* Brother, dear brother, know what I have been,
And know that now there 's but a dining-time
'Twixt us and our confusion; let 's not waste
These precious hours in vain and useless speech.
Alas! these gay attires were not put on
But to some end; this sudden solemn feast
Was not ordain'd to riot in expense;
I that have now been chamber'd here alone,

Barr'd of my guardian, or of any else,
Am not for nothing at an instant freed
To fresh access. Be not deceiv'd, my brother,
This banquet is an harbinger of death
To you and me; resolve yourself it is,
And be prepared to welcome it."

The monster is aware of this; but he has taken his measures. He will not leave to Soranzo the pleasure of killing a guilty wife; he will himself be her executioner. He kills her, and, taking her heart on the point of his dagger, descends to the apartment where the guests are assembled. He makes no secret of his guilt; he proclaims it, boasts of it, and the horrible news kills his poor old father. The furious husband rises and fights; but he soon falls beneath the blows of Giovanni. Vasques, the servant of Soranzo, takes his place; and, while they are fighting, the banditti rush in, and wound Giovanni to the heart.

Thus ends this strange, wild, unnatural tragedy. Too much indulgence has been shown to it. "The author," says Mr. Gifford, "has been praised for the skill with which he has marked the progress of their guilt, from the innocence of fraternal intercourse, to all the madness of licentious passion." We cannot perceive that it is justified: nor do we see what justice there is in the assertion that, at the commencement of the piece, Giovanni has any claim to our admiration, as "gifted with every qualification of a generous and philosophical spirit," or Annabella as "interesting from every thing which can render a female mind amiable." A spirit generous and philosophical! say, rather, a selfish, a base, a narrow spirit, — one short-sighted as it was diabolical. And is such raving as this to be dignified with the name of philosophy? And the female is "interesting!" What! one who in mind was already lost, — one that did not wait to be undone, but ran into the arms of her undoer, — one that, instead of resisting temptation, sought it with eagerness, — is "interesting!" "Giovanni," as Mr. Gifford well observes,

"comes upon the scene a professed and daring infidel, and, like all other infidels, a fatalist; a shameless avower and justifier of his impure purpose. Annabella is not a jot behind him in precocity of vice; and, as appears from a confession wrung from her with little effort, had long suffered her thoughts to wander in the same polluted path as her brother. And though her conscience, as she subsequently professes, 'stood up against her lust,' it was not till the ominous solitude to which she was condemned by her husband convinced her that speedy and fearful vengeance was about to overwhelm her. After all, her repentance is of a very questionable nature; while, on his part, Giovanni continues to accumulate crime on crime, till the harassed mind can bear no more."

The year that witnessed the appearance of this tragedy, also witnessed that of *The Broken Heart.* This, too, is full of horrors; but we have had enough of them, and will give no analysis of the plot. It is, like *The Lover's Melancholy,* beautifully poetic: and that is its great charm: for the incidents are improbable, unnatural. It must be read for its poetry alone. The same year, too (1633), was remarkable for another drama, *Love's Sacrifice.* This is much inferior to either of the preceding. Some fine passages it has; but the plot is singularly defective; and the characters are not well supported: they go from crime to crime, until we cease to take the least interest in them. In fact, by this time, every reader of Ford had had enough of the horrible, and some change was required to gratify a different appetite. He knew this, and in 1634 he produced his only historical drama, *Perkin Warbeck.* This is generally esteemed to be the greatest of his performances. It has been highly praised. "It is," observes a critic, "so admirably conducted, so adorned with poetic sentiments, so full of fine discrimination of character and affecting incidents, that we cannot help regarding that audience as greatly disgraced, which,

having once witnessed its representation, did not secure its perpetuity on the English stage. If any (historic) play in our language can induce us to admit the lawfulness of a comparison with Shakespear, it is this." This is strong language: let us examine how far it is justified.

The incidents which constitute the plot of *Perkin Warbeck* are almost entirely taken from Bacon's History of Henry VII. The drama opens in the royal presence chamber at Westminster; and Henry then addresses his councillors, the bishop of Durham, sir William Stanley, the lords Oxford, Surrey, and Dawbeney: —

" *K. Hen.* Still to be haunted, still to be pursued,
Still to be frighted with false apparitions
Of pageant majesty, and new-coin'd greatness,
As if we were a mockery king in state,
Only ordain'd to lavish sweat and blood,
In scorn and laughter, to the ghosts of York,
Is all below our merits; yet, my lords,
My friends and counsellors, yet we sit fast
In our own royal birth-right: the rent face
And bleeding wounds of England's slaughter'd people,
Have been by us, as by the best physician,
And last both thoroughly cured, and set in safety;
And yet, for all this glorious work of peace,
Ourself is scarce secure.

This new trouble is Perkin Warbeck, who gives himself out as Richard, son of Edward IV. and brother of Edward V., and who pretends to have escaped the fate of that brother when murdered in the Tower by the usurper, his uncle. The dramatist represents this adventurer as really a prince, — as in every respect what he seemed; and, consequently, as having a better claim to the throne than the actual possessor. Fortunately for Henry, sir Robert Clifford, who had been in the confidence of Perkin, unfolds the whole plot to him, and enables him to take measures for frustrating it. He removes to the Tower, not so much for security as that he may seize those whom he has reason to distrust. It is indeed time for him to be resolute: his chamb rlain,

sir William Stanley, is shown by Clifford to be in the conspiracy. Henry is loth to believe in the guilt of his favourite. He starts at the name : —

" *K. Hen.* Urswick*, the light!
View well my face, sirs, is there blood left in it?
" *Dur.* You alter strangely, sir.
" *K. Hen.* Alter, lord bishop!
Why, Clifford stabb'd me, or I dream'd he stabb'd me.
Sirrah, it is a custom with the guilty
To think they set their own stains off, by laying
Aspersions on some nobler than themselves:
Lies wait on treasons, as I find it here.
Thy life again is forfeit; I recal
My word of mercy, for I know thou dar'st
Repeat the name no more.
" *Clif.* I dare, and once more,
Upon my knowledge, name sir William Stanley,
Both in his counsel and his purse, the chief
Assistant to the feigned duke of York.
" *Dur.* Most strange!
" *Urs.* Most wicked!
" *K. Hen.* Yet again, once more.
" *Clif.* Sir William Stanley is your secret enemy,
And, if time fit, will openly profess it.
" *K. Hen.* Sir William Stanley! Who? Sir William Stanley!
My chamberlain, my counsellor, the love,
The pleasure of my court, my bosom friend,
The charge, and the controulment of my person;
The keys and secrets of my treasury;
The all of all I am! I am unhappy.
Misery of confidence, — let me turn traitor
To my own person, yield my sceptre up
To Edward's sister, and her bastard duke!
" *Dur.* You lose your constant temper.
" *K. Hen.* Sir William Stanley!
O do not blame me; he, 't was only he
Who, having rescued me in Bosworth field
From Richard's bloody sword, snatch'd from his head
The kingly crown, and placed it first on mine.
He never fail'd me; what have I deserv'd
To lose this good man's heart, or he his own?"

But the guilt is apparent, and Stanley is executed.

* Chaplain of Henry.

In the meantime the pretender, after an unsuccessful attempt in Ireland, proceeds to Scotland, where he is well received by James IV. That monarch, being won by his manners, engages to assist him in the vindication of his rights; and even bestows upon him the hand of *Katherine Huntley*, a princess of his own house. The earl, her father, who is not so much taken by the appearance of Warbeck, at first opposes the match; but he is soon forced to yield. The character of this lady is well drawn. She is soon attached to the stranger; whom the poet makes as interesting as he can. Troops are raised in Scotland; while ten thousand Cornish rebels march towards London to effect a diversion in the favour of Warbeck. But Henry is not to be surprised. On one side, he sends the bishop of Durham to fortify Norham Castle, and orders Surrey to follow with a considerable force: on the other, he purposes to meet the Cornish insurgents. *Them* he soon discomfits: our attention must now rest in the north.

The parting of Warbeck from his bride, the eve of his expedition to the border, is well described: —

" *War.* Now, dearest, ere sweet sleep shall seal those eyes,
Love's precious tapers, give me leave to use
A parting ceremony; for to-morrow
It would be sacrilege to intrude upon
The temple of thy peace: swift as the morning,
Must I break from the down of thy embraces,
To put on steel, and trace the paths which lead
Through various hazards to a careful throne.
" *Kath.* My lord, I'd fain go with you; there's small fortune
In staying here behind.
" *War.* The churlish brow
Of war, fair dearest, is a sight of horror
For ladies' entertainment: if thou hear'st
A truth of my sad ending by the hand
Of some unnatural subject, thou withall
Shalt hear, how I died worthy of my right,
By falling like a king; and in the close,
Which my last breath shall sound, thy name, thou fairest,
Shall sing a requiem to my soul, unwilling
Only of greater glory, 'cause divided
From such a heaven on earth, as life with thee.

But these are chimes for funerals; my business
Attends on fortune of a sprightlier triumph;
For love and majesty are reconciled,
And vow to crown thee Empress of the West.
" *Kath.* You have a noble language, sir; your right
In me is without question, and however
Events of time may shorten my deserts
In others' pity, yet it shall not stagger
Or constancy, or duty in a wife.
You must be king of me; and my poor heart
Is all I can call mine.
" *War.* But we will live,
Live, beauteous virtue, by the lively test
Of our own blood, to let the *counterfeit*
Be known the world's contempt.
" *Kath.* Pray do not use
That word, it carries fate in 't: the first suit
I ever made, I trust your love will grant.
" *War.* Without denial, dearest.
" *Kath.* That hereafter,
If you return with safety, no adventure
May sever us in tasting any fortune:
I ne'er can stay behind again.
" *War.* You are lady
Of your desires, and shall command your will;
Yet 'tis too hard a promise.
" *Kath.* What our destinies
Have ruled out in their books, we must not search.
But kneel to.
" *War.* Then to fear when hope is fruitless,
Were to be desperately miserable;
Which poverty our greatness does not dream of,
And much more scorns to stoop to; some few minutes
Remain yet, let's be thrifty in our hopes."

The Scottish army moves, and encamps before Norham Castle:

" *K. Ja.* We trifle time against these castle-walls,
The English prelate will not yield: once more
Give him a summons! [*A parley is sounded.*

" *Enter on the walls the Bishop of* DURHAM, *armed, a truncheon in his hand, with soldiers.*

" *War.* See the jolly clerk
Appears, trimm'd like a ruffian.

"*K. Ja.* Bishop, yet
Set ope the ports, and to your lawful sovereign,
Richard of York, surrender up this castle,
And he will take thee to his grace; else Tweed
Shall overflow his banks with English blood,
And wash the sand that cements those hard stones,
From their foundation.
"*Dur.* Warlike king of Scotland,
Vouchsafe a few words from a man enforced
To lay his book aside, and clap on arms,
Unsuitable to my age, or my profession.
Courageous prince, consider on what grounds,
You rend the face of peace, and break a league
With a confederate king that courts your amity:
For whom too? for a vagabond, a straggler,
Not noted in the world by birth or name,
An obscure peasant, by the rage of hell
Loos'd from his chains, to set great kings at strife.
What nobleman, what common man [illegible]te,
What ordinary subject hath come in,
Since first you footed on our territories,
To only feign a welcome? children laugh at
Your proclamations, and the wiser pity
So great a potentate's abuse, by one
Who juggles merely with the fawns and youth
Of an instructed compliment: such spoils,
Such slaughters as the rapine of your soldiers
Already have committed, is enough
To shew your zeal in a conceited justice.
Yet, great king, wake not yet my master's vengeance;
But shake the viper off which gnaws your entrails!
I, and my fellow-subjects are resolv'd,
If you persist, to stand your utmost fury,
Till our last blood drop from us.
"*War.* O sir, lend
No ear to this traducer of my honour!—
What shall I call thee, thou grey-bearded scandal,
That kick'st against the sovereignty to which
Thou owest allegiance?— Treason is bold-faced,
And eloquent is mischief; sacred king,
Be deaf to his own malice.
"*Dur.* Rather yield
Unto those holy motions which inspire
The sacred heart of an anointed body!
It is the surest policy in princes,
To govern well their own, than seek encroachment
Upon another's right.

The bishop's speech makes an impression on James. It is deepened when he hears that the Cornish men have been routed, and that lord Surrey, with twelve earls, one hundred knights, and twenty thousand men, is approaching to raise the siege of Norham castle. On their arrival the Scots fall back, and Surrey is afraid there is no glory for him. A herald, however, soon arrives from king James to the English general. The scene is not without power:

" *Enter* MARCHMONT *and another, in Heralds' Coats.*

" *March.* From Scotland's awful majesty we come
Unto the English general.
" *Sur.* To me?
Say on.
" *March.* Thus, then; the waste and prodigal
Effusion of so much guiltless blood,
As in two potent armies, of necessity,
Must glut the earth's dry womb, his sweet compassion
Hath studied to prevent; for which to thee,
Great earl of Surrey, in a single fight,
He offers his own royal person; fairly
Proposing these conditions only, that
If victory conclude our master's right,
The earl shall deliver for his ransom
The town of Berwick to him, with the Fishgarths;
If Surrey shall prevail, the king will pay
A thousand pounds down present for his freedom,
And silence further arms: so speaks king James.
" *Sur.* So speaks king James! so like a king he speaks.
Heralds, the English general returns
A sensible devotion from his heart,
His very soul, to this unfellow'd grace:
For let the king know, gentle heralds, truly,
How his descent from his great throne, to honour
A stranger subject with so high a title
As his compeer in arms, hath conquer'd more
Than any sword could do; for which (my loyalty
Respected) I will serve his virtues ever
In all humility: but Berwick, say,
Is none of mine to part with. In affairs
Of princes, subjects cannot traffic rights
Inherent to the crown. My life is mine,
That I dare freely hazard; and (with pardon
To some unbribed vain glory) if his majesty

Shall taste a change of fate, his liberty
Shall meet no articles. If I fall, falling
So bravely, I refer me to his pleasure
Without condition; and for this dear favour,
Say, if not countermanded, I will cease
Hostility, unless provoked.
"*March.* This answer
We shall repeat unpartially."

The gallant high-bearing earl appears to great advantage in this scene; so, too, does the Scottish monarch. The bishop, however, is resolved to take a shorter route, — to see James, and dissuade him from prosecuting the war. He offers that prince impunity for the present war, and the hand of Margaret, Henry's daughter, on the condition of forsaking the cause of Warbeck. The offer is accepted; the Scottish troops return home; and Warbeck sails for Cornwall, attended by his wife, and a few companions, to try whether fortune may be more propitious on that coast. Here he is received with open arms; and he has soon a force sufficient to take the field. Katherine is left at St. Michael's Mount; but she soon hears unfavourable reports. She is born, however, to suffer as well as to brave: —

"*St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall.*

"*Enter* KATHERINE *and* JANE, *in Riding Suits, with one Servant.*

"*Kath.* It is decreed: and we must yield to fate,
Whose angry justice, though it threatens ruin,
Contempt, and poverty, is all but trial
Of a weak woman's constancy in suffering.
Here in a stranger's, and an enemy's land,
Forsaken and unfurnish'd of all hopes,
But such as wait on misery, I range
To meet affliction wheresoe'er I tread.
My train, and pomp of servants, is reduced
To one kind gentlewoman, and this groom.
Sweet Jane, now whither must we?
"*Jane.* To your ships,
Dear lady, and turn home.
"*Kath.* Home! I have none.
Fly thou to Scotland; thou hast friends will weep
For joy to bid thee welcome; but, oh Jane,

My Jane! my friends are desperate of comfort,
Is I must be of them: the common charity,
Good people's alms, and prayers of the gentle,
Is the revenue must support my state.
As for my native country, since it once
Saw me a princess in the height of greatness
My birth allow'd me; here I make a vow,
Scotland shall never see me, being fallen,
Or lessen'd in my fortunes. Never, Jane,
Never to Scotland more will I return.
Could I be England's queen, a glory, Jane,
I never fawn'd on, yet the king who gave me,
Hath sent me with my husband from his presence;
Deliver'd us suspected to his nation;
Render'd us spectacles to time and pity:
And is it fit I should return to such
As only listen after our descent
From happiness enjoy'd, to misery,
Expected, though uncertain? Never, never!
Alas, why dost thou weep? and that poor creature
Wipe his wet cheeks too? let me feel alone
Extremities, who know to give them harbour;
Nor thou nor he has cause: you may live safely.
" *Jane.* There is no safety whilst your dangers, madam,
Are every way apparent.
" *Serv.* Pardon, lady;
I cannot choose but shew my honest heart;
You were ever my good lady.
" *Kath.* Oh, dear souls,
Your shares in grief are too too much.

" *Enter* DALYELL.

" *Dal.* I bring,
Fair princess, news of further sadness yet,
Than your sweet youth hath been acquainted with.
" *Kath.* Not more, my lord, than I can welcome; speak it,
The worst, the worst I look for.
" *Dal.* All the Cornish,
At Exeter were by the citizens
Repulsed, encounter'd by the earl of Devonshire,
And other worthy gentlemen of the country.
Your husband march'd to Taunton, and was there
Affronted by king Henry's chamberlain;
The king himself in person, with his army
Advancing nearer, to renew the fight
On all occasions: but the night before

The battles were to join, your husband privately,
Accompanied with some few horse, departed
From out the camp, and posted none knows whither."

The earl of Oxford soon arrives, and seizes Katherine, but he treats her — such are his orders from the wise Henry — with the highest deference. Warbeck is soon taken; and brought before Henry, at Salisbury, by lord Dawbeney:—

"*Daw.* Life to the king, and safety fix his throne!
I here present you, royal sir, a shadow
Of majesty, but, in effect, a substance
Of pity, a young man, in nothing grown
To ripeness, but the ambition of your mercy:
Perkin, the Christian world's strange wonder.
"*K. Hen.* Dawbeney,
We observe no wonder; I behold, 't is true,
An ornament of nature, fine and polish'd,
A handsome youth indeed, but not admire him.
How came he to thy hands?
"*Daw.* From sanctuary
At Bewley, near Southampton; register'd
With these few followers, for persons privileged.
"*K. Hen.* I must not thank you, sir! you were to blame
To infringe the liberty of houses sacred:
Dare we be irreligious?
"*Daw.* Gracious lord,
They voluntarily resigned themselves,
Without compulsion.
"*K. Hen.* So? 't was very well;
'T was very, very well! — turn now thine eyes,
Young man, upon thyself, and thy past actions.
What revels in combustion through our kingdom,
A frenzy of aspiring youth hath danced
Till, wanting breath, thy feet of pride have slipt
To break thy neck!
"*War.* But not my heart; my heart
Will mount, till every drop of blood be frozen
By death's perpetual winter: if the sun
Of majesty be darken'd, let the sun
Of life be hid from me, in an eclipse
Lasting and universal! Sir, remember
There was a shooting in of light, when Richmond,
Not aiming at a crown, retired, and gladly
For comfort to the duke of Bretaine's court.

Richard, who sway'd the sceptre, was reputed
A tyrant then; yet then, a dawning glimmer'd
To some few wand'ring remnants, promising day
When first they ventur'd on a frightful shore,
At Milford Haven —
  " *Daw.* Whither speeds his boldness?
Check his rude tongue, great sir.
  " *K. Hen.* O, let him range:
The player 's on the stage still, 't is his part;
He does but act. What follow'd?
  " *War.* Bosworth Field;
Where, at an instant, to the world's amazement,
A morn to Richmond, and a night to Richard,
Appear'd at once: the tale is soon applied;
Fate which crown'd these attempts when least assured,
Might have befriended others, like resolv'd."

The constancy, the resignation, the pride, with which Warbeck bears his reverses, are intended to prove the royalty of his character. He is a favourite with our author. Indeed, the obscurity which hangs over his life, the contradictions respecting his lineage, the absurd publications concerning him at the period afford but too much reason for the delineation. When grave historians have refused to call this man an impostor, — though he was doubt'ss one, — we need not be surprised at the zeal with which his cause is defended by a dramatic poet.

The scene now changes to the Tower. *Simnel*, who had once been a rebel, had aspired to be a king, and been pardoned, exhorts Warbeck to acknowledge the imposture as he had done, and thereby escape death.

  " *Simn.* I would be earl of Warwick, toil'd and ruffled
Against my master, leap'd to catch the moon,
Vaunted my name Plantagenet, as you do;
An earl forsooth! whenas in truth I was,
As you are, a mere rascal: yet his majesty,
A prince composed of sweetness, — Heaven protect him! —
Forgave me all my villanies, reprieved
The sentence of a shameful end, admitted
My surety of obedience to his service,
And I am now his falconer; live plenteously,
Eat from the king's purse, and enjoy the sweetness

Of liberty and favour; sleep securely:
And is not this, now, better than to buffet
The hangman's clutches? or to brave the cordage
Of a tough halter, which will break your neck?
So, then, the gallant totters!—prithee, Perkin,
Let my example lead thee; be no longer
A counterfeit; confess and hope for pardon.
"*War.* For pardon? hold my heart-strings, whilst contempt
Of injuries, in scorn, may bid defiance
To this base man's foul language! Thou poor vermin,
How dar'st thou creep so near me? thou an earl!
Why, thou enjoy'st as much of happiness
As all the swing of slight ambition flew at.
A dunghill was thy cradle. So a puddle,
By virtue of the sunbeams, breathes a vapour
To infect the purer air, which drops again
Into the muddy womb that first exhaled it.
Bread, and a slavish ease, with some assurance
From the base beadle's whip, crown'd all thy hopes
But, sirrah, ran there in thy veins one drop
Of such a royal blood as flows in mine,
Thou would'st not change condition, to be second
In England's state, without the crown itself!
Coarse creatures are incapable of excellence:
But let the world, as all, to whom I am
This day a spectacle, to time deliver,
And, by tradition, fix posterity,
Without another chronicle than truth,
How constantly my resolution suffer'd
A martyrdom of majesty!
"*Simn.* He's past
Recovery; a bedlam cannot cure him."

This scene is certainly well drawn; nor is the next, where Katherine takes a last farewell of her husband, at all inferior:—

"*Enter* KATHERINE, JANE, DALYELL, *and* OXFORD.

"*Jane.* Dear lady!
"*Oxf.* Whither will you,
Without respect of shame?
"*Kath.* Forbear me, sir,
And trouble not the current of my duty!—
Oh my lov'd lord! can any scorn be yours
In which I have no interest? some kind hand
Lend me assistance, that I may partake

Th' infliction of this penance. My life's dearest,
Forgive me; I have staid too long from tend'ring
Attendance on reproach, yet bid me welcome.
"*War.* Great miracle of constancy! my miseries
Were never bankrupt of their confidence
In worst afflictions, till this — now, I feel them.
Report, and thy deserts, thou best of creatures,
Might to eternity have stood a pattern
For every virtuous wife, without this conquest.
Thou hast outdone belief; yet may their ruin
In after marriages, be never pitied,
To whom thy story shall appear a fable!
Why would'st thou prove so much unkind to greatness,
To glorify thy vows by such a servitude?
I cannot weep; but trust me, dear, my heart
Is liberal of passion: Harry Richmond,
A woman's faith hath robb'd thy fame of triumph!
"*Oxf.* Sirrah, leave off your juggling, and tie up
The devil that ranges in your tongue.
"*Urs.* Thus witches,
Possess'd, even [to] their deaths deluded, say,
They have been wolves and dogs, and sail'd in egg-shells
Over the sea, and rid on fiery dragons;
Pass'd in the air more than a thousand miles,
All in a night — the enemy of mankind
Is powerful, but false; and falsehood 's confident.
"*Oxf.* Remember, lady, who you are; come fro
That impudent imposto!
"*Kath.* You abuse us:
For when the holy churchman join'd our hands,
Our vows were real then; the ceremony
Was not in apparition, but in act.
Be what these people term thee, I am certain
Thou art my husband, no divorce in heaven
Has been sued out between us; 't is injustice
For any earthly power to divide us.
Or we will live, or let us die together
There is a cruel mercy.
"*War.* Spite of tyranny
We reign in our affections, blessed woman!
Read in my destiny the wreck of honour;
Point out, in my contempt of death, to memory,
Some miserable happiness; since, herein,
Even when I fell, I stood enthroned a monarch
Of one chaste wife's troth, pure, and uncorrupted.
Fair angel of perfection, immortality
Shall raise thy name up to an adoration;

Court every rich opinion of true merit,
And saint it in the calendar of virtue,
When I am turn'd into the self-same dust
Of which I was first form'd.
"*Oxf.* The lord ambassador,
Huntley, your father, madam, should he look on
Your strange subjection, in a gaze so public,
Would blush on your behalf, and wish his countr,
Unleft, for entertainment to such sorrow.
"*Kath.* Why art thou angry, Oxford? I must be
More peremptory in my duty. — Sir,
Impute it not unto immodesty,
That I presume to press you to a legacy,
Before we part for ever!
"*War.* Let it be then
My heart, the rich remains of all my fortunes.
"*Kath.* Confirm it with a kiss, pray!
"*War.* Oh! with that
I wish to breathe my last; upon thy lips,
Those equal twins of comeliness, I seal
The testament of honourable vows: [*Kisses her.*
Whoever be that man that shall unkiss
This sacred print next, may he prove more thrifty
In this world's just applause, not more desertful!
"*Kath.* By this sweet pledge of both our souls, I swear
To die a faithful widow to thy bed;
Not to be forced or won: oh, never, never!"

From these extracts, the reader will, doubtless, form a high opinion of the drama. Perhaps it deserves all the praise that it has received. We must regret that Ford did not cultivate the historic muse more than he did. He would have been more successful in the pursuit than any of his contemporaries.

At the other productions of this writer we can merely glance. — *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble;* — a quaint title enough, — will scarcely sustain his reputation. Some fine passages it undoubtedly has; and it has some good traits of character; but the plot is a foolish one, and the dialogue is wearisome. — *The Lady's Trial* is not much better. Of poetry it has enough; many of the sentiments are exceedingly fine; the diction is easy, elegant, harmonious; but still there is not sufficient in the plot; and the termination is not only unnatural, but foolish. —

The Witch of Edmonton is one of the most celebrated plays of our author, though most of it was written in conjunction with Decker and Rowley. It does not deserve its celebrity. It was probably founded on some real events. There was certainly an old woman named Sawyer burnt for a witch in the reign of Elizabeth. The piece has some good situations, some just descriptions, but it is unworthy of Ford's genius.—*The Sun's Darling* is a mere display of poetry; it is not a drama, but a highly imaginative performance.

We have before observed that the circumstances of Ford were easy. He does not, however, seem to have practised at the bar; probably, as before insinuated, he held some sinecure situation through the interest of his grandfather. Yet he takes credit to himself for his legal studies; and he is anxious for it to be understood that his dramatic pursuits were merely relaxations from his legal; that his chief attention was directed to his profession. It might be so; but if it were, his legal duties could scarcely have been numerous; for he produced many finished dramas between 1623 and 1639, the year when he appears to have bid a final adieu to London, and retired to his native county, where he passed the remainder of his days. Whether he joined in the civil war — his connections were decidedly royalist — may be doubted. Probably he was too fond of his ease. But we know nothing whatever of his declining years; we can only find reason to infer that his family suffered under the usurpation. We know not when he died; but this event must have happened before 1657; as in that year his *Witch of Edmonton* was called an orphan production. He does not appear ever to have been married; and in 1684 the family of Ford was extinct.

That Ford was "a man of genius and a poet," will be acknowledged by every reader of taste. He may be placed in the second rank of dramatic writers.

*John Webster.**

Though this writer must certainly be placed among our second-rate dramatists — and considering their merit, this is no slight praise — we know not when he was born or when he died. He is said to have been clerk of St. Andrew's, Holborn, and a member of the Merchant Tailors' company. The first statement, however, may be doubted; no record of his name exists, either in the registers of that church, or in the MSS. belonging to the Parish Clerks' Hall. Nor is it certain that he was one of the guild of Merchant Tailors. There are, indeed, entries relating to *three* persons named John Webster, in the books of the company; but which of them was *the* John Webster? Probably not one. And in the Prerogative Office there are two wills made by a John Webster; but the dates of neither — supposing that the testator was near the end of his days when the instrument was signed — will agree with those of the dramatist. His life must therefore remain in obscurity, unless his future be more successful than his past biographers in their researches.

The earliest notices of this author are to be found in the *Memoranda* of Henslowe. From them it appears that, in 1602, he was joined with Decker, Drayton, Middleton, and Munday, in the composition of *The Two Harpies*. The same year he assisted four other writers in the tragedy of *Jane Shore*. Both these dramas are lost. In 1604, he was employed to make some additions to the *Malcontent* of Marston; but these cannot be distinguished from the rest of the drama. In 1607, three dramas, *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, *Westward Ho!* and *Northward Ho!* were given to the press. These were the joint composition of Webster and Decker. There is much animation in these pieces; but there is also

*Biographia Dramatica; Lamb's Dramatic Poets; Dodsley's Old Plays; Dyce's Webster, &c.

much low buffoonery and much that is licentious. They afford us some insight into the manners of our ancestors; but it is a knowledge with which we might easily dispense; and the world would have sustained no loss had they perished with so many thousand of other pieces in the vaults of St. Paul's.

But in 1612 appeared a drama that will live as long as the language in which it is written, — unless, indeed, another fire, universal as that of 1666, destroy all record of its merit. This was *The White Devil*, and it was wholly the offspring of Webster's genius. A short analysis of it must, however, satisfy the reader's curiosity.

Vittoria Corombona, or, as she is termed, *The White Devil*, is the wife of Camillo, a Roman citizen, a man far from wealthy. Her beauty attracts the notice of Ursini, the duke of Brachiano; and her own brother, Flamineo, who is the duke's secretary, does not scruple to enter into the criminal views of that prince. Vittoria requires no persuasion; she is as forward as the duke; and the only care is to carry on the intrigue without the danger of a surprise by the husband. The duke visits the house of Camillo, and, through the management of Flamineo, enjoys the society of Vittoria. Their conversation sufficiently exposes her character. How much more ready she is to lead the way into the deepest guilt than even her paramour, is evident: —

" *Vit. Cor.* To pass away the time, I 'll tell your grace
A dream I had last night.
" *Brach.* Most wishedly.
" *Vit. Cor.* A foolish idle dream.
Methought I walk'd about the mid of night
Into a churchyard, where a goodly yew-tree
Spread her large root in ground: under that yew,
As I sate sadly leaning on a grave
Checquer'd with cross sticks, there came stealing in
Your dutchess and my husband; one of them
A pick-axe bore, th' other a rusty spade,
And in rough terms they 'gan to challenge me
About this yew

"*Brach.* That tree?
"*Vit. Cor.* This harmless yew:
They told me my intent was to root up
That well-grown yew, and plant i' th' stead of it
A wither'd black-thorn: and for that they vow'd
To bury me alive. My husband straight
With pick-axe 'gan to dig, and your fell dutchess
With shovel, like a fury, voided out
The earth, and scatter'd bones: lord, how, methought,
I trembled! and yet for all this terror
I could not pray.
"*Flam.* No; the devil was in your dream.
"*Vit. Cor.* When to my rescue there arose, methought
A whirlwind, which let fall a massy arm
From that strong plant;
And both were struck dead by that sacred yew,
In that base shallow grave that was their due.
"*Flam.* Excellent devil! she hath taught him in a dream
To make away his dutchess and her husband."

There is some power in this description; and it is no less graphic. The churchyard with its gloomy yew, its open grave, and fated diggers, is brought before us with a fidelity almost equal to the real scene.

Brachiano suddenly learns that his duchess, with her brother, *Francisco de' Medicis*, duke of Florence, are in Rome. He likes not this interruption of his amour, and when reproached for it by his brother-in-law, he becomes quarrelsome, and it is with difficulty a reconciliation is effected. The scene with his duchess, *Isabella*, an amiable, virtuous, and affectionate woman, shows the utter brutality of his nature. Her patient endurance, her sweetness of composure, though her heart is broken by his cruelty, render her an interesting object of attention. She returns to Padua, to wait the return of her husband, whenever it may suit his pleasure to leave the guilty pleasures of Rome. But she is to see him no more. Through the contrivance of Brachiano and his infamous agent Flamineo, a doctor is sent after her; and that very night Camillo is also to be removed by death. The victims are not murdered on the stage; but their fate is seen by the art of a con-

jurer, and through the medium, as it appears, of phantasmagoria. Brachiano knows that the fatal hour has arrived; and he is anxious to learn, by magical aid, how both enterprises succeed. The scenes brought before his eyes by the conjurer are admirably conceived: —

" *Enter* Brachiano, *with one in the habit of a conjurer.*

" *Brach.* Now, sir, I claim your promise: 't is dead midnight,
The time prefix'd to show me, by your art,
How the intended murder of Camillo,
And our loath'd dutchess, grow to action.

" *Con.* You have won me, by your bounty, to a deed
I do not often practise. Some there are,
Which by sophistick tricks, aspire that name
Which I would gladly lose, of necromancer;
As some that use to juggle upon cards,
Seeming to conjure, when indeed they cheat;
Others that raise up their confederate spirits
'Bout wind-mills, and endanger their own necks
For making of a squib; and some there are
Will keep a curtal to shew juggling tricks,
And give out 't is a spirit; besides these,
Such a whole ream of almanack-makers, figure-flingers,
Fellows, indeed, that only live by stealth,
Since they do merely lie about stol'n goods,
They'd make men think the devil were fast and loose,
With speaking fustian Latin. Pray sit down;
Put on this night-cap, sir, 't is charm'd; and now
I'll shew you, by my strong commanding art,
The circumstance that breaks your dutchess' heart.

" *A dumb Show.*

" *Enter suspiciously* Julio *and* Christophero: *they draw a curtain where Brachiano's picture is; they put on spectacles of glass, which cover their eyes and noses, and then burn perfumes afore the picture, and wash the lips of the picture; that done, quenching the fire, and putting off their spectacles, they depart laughing.*

" *Enter* Isabella *in her night-gown, as to bed-ward, with lights after her,* Count Lodovico, Giovanni, Guid-antonio, *and others waiting on her: she kneels down as to prayers, then draws the curtain of the picture, does three reverences to it, and kisses it thrice; she faints, and will not suffer them to*

come near it; dies; sorrow expressed in Giovanni, and in Count Lodovico. She's conveyed out solemnly.

"*Brach.* Excellent! then she 's dead.
"*Con.* She 's poisoned
By the fum'd picture. 'T was her custom nightly,
Before she went to bed, to go and visit
Your picture, and to feed her eyes and lips
On the dead shadow: doctor Julio,
Observing this, infects it with an oil,
And other poison'd stuff, which presently
Did suffocate her spirits.
* * * * *
* * * Now turn another way,
And view Camillo's far more politick fate.
Strike louder, musick, from this charmed ground,
To yield, as fits the act, a tragick sound!

"*The second dumb Show.*

"*Enter* FLAMINEO, MARCELLO, CAMILLO, *with four more, as captains: they drink healths, and dance; a vaulting horse is brought into the room; Marcello and two more whispered out of the room, while Flamineo and Camillo strip themselves into their shirts, as to vault; they compliment who shall begin; as Camillo is about to vault, Flamineo pitcheth him upon his neck, and, with the help of the rest, writhes his neck about; seems to see if it be broke, and lays him folded double, as 't were under the horse; makes shews to call for help; Marcello comes in, laments; sends for the Cardinal and Duke, who come forth with armed men; wonder at the act; command the body to be carried home; apprehend Flamineo, Marcello, and the rest, and go, as 't were, to apprehend Vittoria.*

"*Brach.* 'T was quaintly done; but yet each circumstance
I taste not fully.
"*Con.* O, 't was most apparent!
You saw them enter, charg'd with their deep healths
To their boon voyage; and, to second that,
Flamineo calls to have a vaulting horse
Maintain their sport; the virtuous Marcello
Is innocently plotted forth the room;
Whilst your eye saw the rest, and can inform you
The engine of all.
"*Brach.* It seems Marcello and Flamineo
Are both committed.
"*Con.* Yes, you saw them guarded;
And now they are come with purpose to apprehend
Your mistress, fair Vittoria. We are now

Beneath her roof: 't were fit we instantly
Make out by some back postern.
" *Brach.* Noble friend,
You bind me ever to you: this shall stand
As the firm seal annexed to my hand;
It shall inforce a payment.
" *Con.* Sir, I thank you. [*Exit* BRACHIANO.
Both flowers and weeds spring, when the sun is warm,
And great men do great good, or else great harm. [*Exit.*"

Vittoria Corombona is tried for the murder of her husband. That trial is a master-scene; but it is too long for extract. The behaviour of the criminal is bold. She stands before here judges, " alive to all the terrors of her situation, yet relying in the readiness of her wit, conscious of the influence of her beauty, and not without a certain sense of protection in case of extreme need from the interposition of Brachiano. She surprises by the readiness of her replies; but never, in a single instance, has the author ascribed to her one word which was likely to have fallen from an innocent person under similar circumstances. Vittoria is undaunted, but it is by effort. Her intrepidity has none of the calmness which naturally attends the person who knows that his own plain tale can set down his adversary; but it is the high-wrought boldness of a resolute spirit, — a determination to outface facts, to brave the evidence she cannot refute, and to act the martyr though convicted as a culprit." * This is certainly the triumph of art. There is great difficulty in making the reader distinguish between the consciousness of innocence and the audacity of guilt, where that audacity is speciously modified by an appearance of innocence. As a late writer has well observed †, " The White Devil of Italy sets off a bad cause so specially, and pleads with such an innocence — resembling boldness, that we seem to see that matchless beauty of her form which inspires such gay confidence into her; and are ready to expect, when she has done her pleadings, that her very judges, her accusers, the grave ambassadors who sit as

* Mr. Dyce. † Mr. Lamb.

spectators, and all the court, will rise and make proffer to defend her in spite of the utmost conviction of her guilt." This is true, and the whole scene is a powerful one; but it has not been sufficiently observed that the interference, we may add the brutality, of the presiding judge dispose us to something like sympathy with the accused. When we perceive that passion is admitted to the seat of justice, we naturally take part with the object of abuse. But in this respect the representation is untrue. No such scene as this ever disgraced a bench of justice; not even Jeffreys, in his most brutal mood, ever approached it. Least of all could such a disgrace be expected in Rome, a city where, above every other place, judicial decorum is observed, — where, above every other place, there is mercy in the spirit, no less than the forms, of justice. And there is an impropriety here, which none of the critics have perceived: the presiding judge is a cardinal; but no cardinal, no bishop, no priest, no abbot, no ecclesiastic, high or low, ever sits "in judgment of blood" The canons inflict no less a doom than *interdictio à sacris*, and the greater excommunication, on any churchman who should presume to sit, or to concur, in the judgment of a cause where death would be the penalty of conviction. Of the canons, however, Webster knew nothing; and, notwithstanding the want of verisimilitude in the trial, we cannot but admire it as a production of great art.

As there is not evidence of the capital offence, Vittoria is next arraigned on the charge of adultery, and is easily found guilty. Her sentence is confinement in the House of Convertites, — a sort of penitentiary, extremely rigid in its discipline. Thither she is conducted, and thither she is followed by the heart of Brachiano. His passion, indeed, makes him the instrument of his now mortal enemy, Francisco de' Medicis. To degrade him still more, Francisco writes a love-letter to Vittoria, which he causes to fall into the hands of Brachiano. In it he tells her that he has contrived the means of her escape; that he will, if she pleases, become her

partner for life. Brachiano is jealous; he is envious too. "If," he reasons, "the grand duke of Florence would not hesitate to marry Vittoria, why should I?" He falls into the snare; effects her escape, repairs to Padua, and makes her duchess of Brachiano. So far, guilt has impunity; but it is soon to be punished. Francisco de' Medicis has degraded his enemy; he will now destroy him. Disguising himself as a christianised Turk, and accompanied by a few desperate men whom he has admitted into his plot, he repairs to Padua, and offers to enter the service of Brachiano. His offer is accepted; and the means of his vengeance are soon ready. The beaver of Brachiano is poisoned; and scarcely has he put it on his head, when his "brain is on fire," and he dies raving. Lastly, Vittoria, Flamineo, and Zanche, the African slave, are massacred by order of Francisco de' Medicis.

To look for retributive justice in this drama, would be vain. Francisco, one of the most guilty of men, escapes; while Hortensio, the innocent brother of Flamineo, perishes. There is, too, much to censure in the plot, the incidents of which are neither natural nor connected. But it is a drama of great power, and we know not that in this respect, any more than in the elegance and vigour of the language, it has been surpassed since the days of Shakespear.

The Dutchess of Malfi, which was printed in 1623, but acted as early as 1619, is another of Webster's most finished dramas. This princess, who is the very reverse of the *White Devil*, is a widow when the drama opens. Her two brothers, of whom one is a *cardinal*, the other *Ferdinand*, duke of Calabria, intend that she shall ever remain one, partly that she may remain under their tutelage, and partly that they may share in her revenues:—

> "The marriage night
> Is the entrance into some prison"—

is the threat of the cardinal. Ferdinand has a deeper manner:—

> "You are my sister;
> This was my father's poignard, do you see?
> I'd be loath to see it look rusty."

But what woman is to be diverted by menace from her purpose? She has cast her eyes on *Antonio Bologna*, the steward of her household; and she is resolved to marry him, but to keep the connection secret from the world. She, of course, has to make the first advances; nay, to do the whole of the courtship:—

> "The misery of us that are born great!
> We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us;
> And as a tyrant doubles with his words,
> And fearfully equivocates, so we
> Are forc'd to express our violent passions
> In riddles, and in dreams, and leave the path
> Of simple virtue, which was never made
> To seem the thing it is not."

But the lovers have a spy on their actions: it is discovered that the duchess has been delivered of a child, and the news is borne to Rome, where the two brothers reside. Vengeance is decreed, but it is not promptly pursued: the duchess has time to bring forth two more children before it overtakes her. Then Ferdinand proceeds to her court. Aware of her danger, she sends Antonio away, and, under the plea of a pilgrimage to Loretto, follows him. She prefers living in obscurity with the husband of her choice, to all the worthless splendour which surrounds her. The next scene finds Antonio, the duchess, their children and servants, on the way to Loretto. But the bloodhounds are in pursuit of him; and, for his own safety (she does not fear for herself), she compels him to fly towards Milan, with his eldest son, while she faces the pursuers. By them she is taken back to her palace, imprisoned, and kept in dread of her life. Her fate is not long doubtful: Bosola, who has been the spy of her actions, is employed to

murder her, her children, and her waiting-woman Cariola. He enters the prison, and, after some curious discourse, she demands:—

" *Dutch.* Let me know fully therefore the effect
Of this thy dismal preparation,
This talk, fit for a charnel.
" *Bos.* Now I shall:

(*Enter Executioners, with a coffin, cords, and a bell.*)

Here is a present from your princely brothers,
And may it arrive welcome, for it brings
Last benefit, last sorrow.
" *Dutch.* Let me see it:
I have so much obedience in my blood,
I wish it in their veins to do them good.
" *Bos.* This is your last presence chamber.
" *Cari.* O, my sweet lady!
" *Dutch.* Peace; it affrights not me.
" *Bos.* I am the common bellman,
That usually is sent to condemn'd persons
The night before they suffer.
" *Dutch.* Even now thou said'st
Thou wast a tomb-maker.
" *Bos.* 'T was to bring you
By degrees to mortification. Listen.
Hark, now every thing is still,
The screech owl, and the whistler shrill,
Call upon our dame aloud,
And bid her quickly don her shroud!
Much you had of land and rent;
Your length in clay's now competent:
A long war disturb'd your mind;
Here your perfect peace is signed.
Of what is 't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death, a hideous storm of terror.
Strew your hair with powders sweet,
Don clean linen, bathe your feet,
And (the foul fiend more to check,)
A crucifix let bless your neck:
'T is now full tide 'tween night and day
End your groan, and come away.
" *Cari.* Hence, villains, tyrants, murderers! alas
What will you do with my lady?— Call for help.

"*Dutch.* To whom, to our next neighbours? they are mad-folks.
"*Bos.* Remove that noise.
"*Dutch.* Farewell, Cariola.
In my last will, I have not much to give:
A many hungry guests have fed upon me;
Thine will be a poor reversion.
"*Cari.* I will die with her.
"*Dutch.* I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep. — Now what you please:
[*Cariola is forced out.*
What death?
"*Bos.* Strangling; here are your executioners.
"*Dutch.* I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' th' lungs,
Would do as much as they do.
"*Bos.* Doth not death fright you?
"*Dutch.* Who would be afraid on 't,
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In th' other world;
"*Bos.* Yet, methinks,
The manner of your death should much afflict you;
This cord should terrify you.
"*Dutch.* Not a whit:
What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut
With diamonds? or to be smothered
With cassia? or to be shot to death with pearls?
I know death hath ten thousand several doors
For men to take their exits; and 't is found
They go on such strange geometrical hinges,
You may open them both ways: any way, for heaven sake,
So I were out of your whispering. Tell my brothers,
That I perceive death, now I am well awake,
Best gift is they can give, or I can take.
I would fain put off my last woman's fault,
I 'd not be tedious to you.
"*Execut.* We are ready.
"*Dutch.* Dispose my breath how please you, but my body
Bestow upon my women, will you?
"*Execut.* Yes.
"*Dutch.* Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength,
Must pull down heaven upon me:
Yet stay, heaven-gates are not so highly arch'd
As princes' palaces; they that enter there,
Must go upon their knees. Come, violent death,

Serve for mandragora, to make me sleep.
Go, tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet. [*They strangle the Dutchess.*
"*Bos.* Where 's the waiting-woman?
Fetch her: some other strangle the children.
[*Cariola and children brought in: they strangle the children.*
Look you, there sleeps your mistress.
"*Cari.* O, you are damn'd
Perpetually for this! My turn is next;
Is 't not so order'd?
"*Bos.* Yes, and I am glad
You are so well prepar'd for 't."

Ferdinand feels some compunction when he sees her corpse, and he upbraids Bosola for his inhumanity:—

"*Ferd.* Get thee into some unknown part o' th' world,
That I may never see thee.
"*Bos.* Let me know
Wherefore I should be thus neglected? Sir,
I serv'd your tyranny, and rather strove,
To satisfy yourself, than all the world
And though I loath'd the evil, yet I lov'd
You that did counsel it; and rather sought
To appear a true servant, than an honest man.
"*Ferd.* I'll go hunt the badger by owl-light
'T is a deed of darkness. [*Exit.*
"*Bos.* He 's much distracted. Off, my painted honour!
While with vain hopes our faculties we tire,
We seem to sweat in ice and freeze in fire.
What would I do, were this to do again?
I would not change my peace of conscience
For all the wealth of Europe. She stirs; here 's life:—
Return, fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine
Out of this sensible hell: —she 's warm, she breathes:—
Upon thy pale lips I will melt my heart,
To store them with fresh colour. —Who 's there!
Some cordial drink! Alas! I dare not call:
So pity would destroy pity. Her eye opes,
And heaven in it seems to ope, that late was shut,
To take me up to mercy.
"*Dutch.* Antonio!
"*Bos.* Yes, madam, he is living;
The dead bodies you saw, were but feign'd statues;
He 's reconciled to your brothers; the pope hath wrought
The atonement.
"*Dutch.* Mercy! [*Dies.*

"*Bos.* O, she 's gone again! there the cords of life broke.
O, sacred innocence, that sweetly sleeps
On turtles' feathers, whilst a guilty conscience
Is a black register, wherein is writ
All our good deeds and bad, a perspective
That shows us hell! That we cannot be suffer'd
To do good when we have a mind to it!
This is manly sorrow;
These tears, I am very certain, never grew
In my mother's milk: my estate is sunk
Below the degree of fear: where were
These penitent fountains, while she was living?
O, they were frozen up! here is a sight
As direful to my soul, as is the sword
Unto a wretch hath slain his father. Come,
I 'll bear thee hence,
And execute thy last will; that 's deliver
Thy body to the reverend dispose
Of some good women: that the cruel tyrant
Shall not deny me. Then I 'll post to Milan,
Where somewhat I will speedily enact
Worth my dejection."

The scene now changes to Milan, where Antonio resides. Ferdinand is there, raving mad; and his brother the Cardinal fears lest, in his paroxysms, he betray their common guilt. The church dignitary has a mistress, who discovers it; her he poisons; and Bosola, who knows too much, he is resolved to remove. But Bosola has vengeance to exercise, and he is resolved to anticipate the cardinal. The very night on which the new tragedy is to be acted, Antonio resolves to visit the cardinal and supplicate for mercy: he is tired of confinement; he is weary of danger; and would rather fail in his suit, than live miserably. The scene in which, accompanied by his friend Delio, he gropes his way, by night, to the Cardinal's cloisters, is well described: it is graphic, melancholy, ominous:—

"*Delio.* Yond 's the cardinal's window. This fortification
Grew from the ruins of an ancient abbey;
And to yond side o' th' river, lies a wall,
Piece of a cloister, which in my opinion

Gives the best echo that you ever heard,
So hollow and so dismal, and withal
So plain in the distinction of our words,
That many have suppos'd it is a spirit
That answers.
  " *Ant.* I do love these ancient ruins.
We never tread upon them, but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history:
And questionless, here in this open court,
Which now lies naked to the injuries
Of stormy weather, some men lie interr'd
Lov'd the church so well, and gave so largely to 't,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till dooms-day; but all things have their end:
Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,
Must have like death that we have.
  " *Echo* (*from the Dutchess's grave*). Like death that we have.
  " *Delio.* Now the echo hath caught you.
  " *Ant.* It groan'd, methought, and gave
A very deadly accent.
  " *Echo.* Deadly accent.
  " *Delio.* I told you 't was a pretty one: you may make it
A huntsman, or a falconer, a musician,
Or a thing of sorrow.
  " *Echo.* A thing of sorrow.
  " *Ant.* Ay sure, that suits it best.
  " *Echo.* That suits it best.
  " *Ant.* 'T is very like my wife's voice
  " *Echo.* Ay, wife's voice.
  " *Delio.* Come let us walk farther from 't.
I would not have you go to th' cardinal's to-night!
Do not.
  " *Echo.* Do not.
  " *Delio.* Wisdom doth not more moderate wasting sorrow,
Than time: take time for't; be mindful of thy safety.
  " *Echo.* Be mindful of thy safety.
  " *Ant.* Necessity compels me:
Make scrutiny throughout the passes
Of your own life, you 'll find it impossible
To fly your fate.
  " *Echo.* O fly your fate!
  " *Delio.* Hark! the dead stones seem to have pity on you
And give you good counsel.
  " *Ant.* Echo, I will not talk with thee,
For thou art a dead thing.
  " *Echo.* Thou art a dead thing.

"*Ant.* My dutchess is asleep now,
And her little ones, I hope sweetly: O heaven,
Shall I never see her more?
"*Echo.* Never see her more.
"*Ant.* I mark'd not one repetition of the echo
But that; and on the sudden a clear light
Presented me a face folded in sorrow.
"*Delio* Your fancy merely.
"*Ant.* Come, I'll be out of this ague,
For to live thus, is not indeed to live;
It is a mockery and abuse of life;
I will not henceforth save myself by halves;
Lose all, or nothing."

How the grave of the Duchess came to be in Milan, and how the Cardinal and Ferdinand came there, might puzzle one that had the least notion of unity of place; but it was necessary to bring all the surviving actors together, in order to hasten the catastrophe. Antonio proceeds in the dark; he is killed by Bosola, who supposes him to be the Cardinal: the Cardinal himself is next found and stabbed; Ferdinand hastens to the same place, distracted, and fights with Bosola, who kills him, but not until he has received a mortal wound.

This tragedy, it will be seen, has improbabilities enough; and is deformed by a catastrophe no less bloody than that of *The White Devil.* Still it has merit. The attachment of Antonio and the Duchess is delicately and pleasingly described: "it is the wedded friendship of middle life transplanted to cheer the cold and glittering solitude of a court." There is something pathetic in the parting words she utters when, on their way to Loretto, she forces him to flee to Milan:—

"The birds that live i' th' field
On the wild benefit of nature, live
Happier than we; for they may chuse their mates,
And carol their sweet pleasures to the spring."

But the fondness of Webster for the awful, the fearful, the supernatural, is one of his chief characteristics. The drama of *Vittoria* was of this class: the silent sepulchre, the sculptured monument, the tolling bell, the black coffin, the open grave, the melancholy yew, were objects familiar to his mind; and

in this respect he bears some resemblance both to Blair and Young.

Appius and Virginia is another of the plays for which Webster has been praised. It is a fine drama. Of the rest,—The *Devil's Law Case,* and *The Thracian Wonder,* we cannot speak with much approbation. The dramas which he composed in conjunction with other writers we shall not notice, from its being impossible to separate what is his, from what is not his.

Minor Dramatists.

Before we dismiss the subject of the early English stage, and for the purpose of throwing some additional light on what we have already written, we shall devote a few pages to some of the minor dramatists that illustrated the reigns of the first and second princes of the house of Stewart.

1. Of these, none had greater celebrity than *George Chapman* (1557—1634). Omitting in this place all consideration of his version of Homer, which Pope so much condemns, and of his various poetical effusions, which may one day, perhaps, be collected, his dramas deserve something more than the neglect with which they have been uniformly treated. They discover, indeed, no great knowledge of human nature; they are more conversant with books than with the world; but the dialogue is often lively, the sentiments are often just, and there is variety enough in the incidents to keep the attention alive.

No fewer than twenty pieces, either wholly or partly written by Chapman, are enumerated by the historians of our ancient drama. Of them, the most celebrated are *Bussy d'Amboys, The Widow's Tears,* and *The Inns of Court.* Dryden will not allow the first to have any merit: "I have sometimes wondered *in the reading* what was become of those glaring colours which

amazed me in *Bussy d'Amboys upon the theatre;* but when I had taken up what I supposed a fallen star, I found that I had been cozened with a jelly: nothing but a cold, dull mass, which glittered no longer than it was shooting. A dwarfish thought dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross hyperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to wind up all, incorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense, or, at best, a scantling of wit, which lay gasping for life and groaning beneath a heap [illegible] rubbish. A famous modern poet used to sacrifice, every year, a Statius to Virgil's manes; and I have indig[illegible] o[illegible] urn a *D'Amboys* annually, to the memo[illegible] on." Certainly *Bussy d'Amboys* is not, howeve[illegible] r it once was, among the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Chapma[illegible]. It has some of the defects which Dryden reprehends; yet it does not merit this severity. Any one, indeed, may see that the critic is endeavour[illegible]g to be strong [illegible]ather than true; he is more observant of the manner than the substance. *The Widow's Tears* has some comic merit; and the same may be said of *All Foo[illegible]* [illegible] [illegible]ct, the mind of Chapman was better fitted for humour than for passions.

Fro[illegible] hi[illegible] translation of Homer, Hesiod, &c., the world ne[illegible] not be told that Chapman was a scholar. In a [illegible] found knowledge of Latin and Greek, few of his time were equal to him. Wood does not know whether he was educated at Oxford or Cambridge: he appears to have resided for some time at the former, where, however, he took no degree. He was much esteemed at court, especially by prince Henry, the eldest son of James I. His private character was more estimable than that of most dramatists, either at that or any other period. Old Antony tells us that "he was a person of most reverend aspect, religious and temperate; qualities rarely meeting in a poet." He was cautious in the choice of his companions, and this added no little to his respectability.

2. *Thomas Middleton,* who appears to have died

about the year 1630, was a voluminous writer. He wrote, either wholly or in part, nearly thirty dramas. Some of them are worthless; but there are others which, though deficient as a whole, contain some effective scenes. Such is *A Mad World My Masters*, and *The Roaring Girl.* He must, indeed, have had merit of some kind, or he would never have been admitted as the associate of writers so eminent as Fletcher, Ben Jonson, and Massinger. He excels in vulgar humour; his dialogue is full of animation; and his incidents are striking. But, unfortunately, he descends into the lowest vulgarity; his allusions are licentious; and his wit often sinks into buffoonery. The kind of life with which he was familiar is but too apparent from all his dramas. Of a moral he has no conception; he wrote only to amuse, and, provided that object be gained, little scruple has he in regard to the means.

3. *John Marston* had much higher pretensions than either of the preceding, or, we may add, of any other dramatist after Fletcher, Ford, and Massinger; perhaps he may be ranked even with them. Of his birth-place or family, nothing certain is known. He is supposed to have been a Shropshire man; and the same John Marston who in 1592, being student of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, took the degree of B. A. His acquaintance were among the most distinguished men of the age. To Ben Jonson he dedicated *The Malcontent*, one of the noblest of his performances; and he bestows great praise on that eminent man. Their friendship, however, was of no long duration; for, in his tragedy of *Sophonisba*, he ridicules the pedantry of that writer. They were, indeed, so far reconciled, that when he and Decker were committed to prison for that passage in *Eastward Hoe!* which reflected on the Scotch, Jonson insisted on accompanying them.* Yet they must again have been divided; for, in his conversations with Drummond, Ben speaks slightingly of Marston.† But these trifles do not affect the merit of

* See before, p. 148. † See before, p. 192.

either, and perhaps they are undeserving of the biographer's notice. We know not when Marston died; but he was alive in 1633. Probably he did not long survive that year, or he would have given to the world some token of his existence. Yet if, as some conjecture, he turned preacher, — whether puritanical, or in the established church, they do not inform us, — he would certainly bid farewell to a profession which at no period was considered creditable. If he be the same Marston who was lecturer of the Middle Temple, and who, in 1642, preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, he must, indeed, have greatly changed in his pursuits; but we suspect that they were two individuals.

Among the dramas of this excellent writer, *The Malcontent* will always hold the first rank. We can enter into no analysis of the piece; but we cannot dismiss it without giving a few short extracts from it. Here is an invocation to sleep: —

" *Malevole.*. I cannot sleep, my eyes' ill-neighbouring lids
Will hold no fellowship. O thou pale sober night,
Thou that in sluggish fumes all sense dost steep;
Thou that givest all the world full leave to play,
Unbend'st the feebled veins of sweaty labour;
The gally-slave, that all the toilsome day
Tugs at the oar against the stubborn wave,
Straining his rugged veins, snores fast;
The stooping scythe-man, that doth barb the field,
Thou makest wink sure: in night all creatures sleep,
Only the malcontent, that 'gainst his fate
Repines and quarrels: alas, he 's goodman tell-clock,
His sallow jaw-bones sink with wasting moan;
Whilst others' beds are down, his pillow 's stone."

This would be tolerable enough, did we not remember the celebrated invocation of Henry V.

The unfaithfulness of women is thus described. The words are supposed to be spoken by the despairing duke of Geneva, and heard by Piètro, the hermit of the rock: —

" *Pietro.* Now had the mounting sun's all-ripening wings
Swept the cold sweat of night from earth's dank breast,

When I (whom men call Hermit of the Rock)
Forsook my cell, and clamber'd up a cliff,
Against whose base the heady Neptune dash'd
His high-curl'd brows; there 't was I eased my limbs:
When lo! my entrails melted with the moan
Some one, who far 'bove me was climb'd, did make —
Methinks I hear him yet. — O female faith!

* * * * * *

Go sow the ingrateful sand, and love a woman:
And do I live to be the scoff of men?
To be the wittal cuckold, even to hug my poison?
Thou knowest, O truth!
Sooner hard steel will melt with southern wind,
A seaman's whistle calm the ocean,
A town on fire be extinct with tears,
Than women, vow'd to blushless impudence,
With sweet behaviour and soft minioning,
Will turn from that where appetite is fix'd.
O powerful blood! how thou dost slave their souls!
I wash'd an Ethiope, who, for recompense,
Sully'd my name: and must I then be forc'd
To walk, to live thus black? must! must! fie,
He that can bear with must, he cannot die.
With that he sigh'd so passionately deep,
That the dull air even groan'd: at last he cries,
Sink shame in seas, sink deep enough — so dies.
For then I view'd his body fall, and sowse
Into the foamy main — O then I saw
That which methinks I see. it was the duke."

The hermit of the rock has need enough to curse the infidelity of the sex. He has left a frail wife, *Aurelia*, who believes him to be dead, and who one day approaches his cell, — in sorrow, because banishment has forced her to look into herself:—

"*Aurelia.* To banishment! led on to banishment!

"*Pietro.* Lady, the blessedness of repentance to you.

"*Aurelia.* Why? why? I can desire nothing but death,
Nor deserve any thing but hell.
If Heaven should give sufficiency of grace,
To clear my soul, it would make Heaven graceless:
My sins would make the stock of mercy poor;
O they would tire Heaven's goodness to reclaim them!
Judgment is just yet, from that vast villain,

Be sure he shall not miss sad punishment
'Fore he shall rule! On to my cell of shame.
" *Pietro.* My cell 't is, lady; where, instead of masks,
Musick, tilts, tournies, and such court-like shews,
The hollow murmur of the checkless winds
Shall groan again; whilst the unquiet sea
Shakes the whole rock with foamy battery.'
There usherless the air comes in and out;
The rheumy vault will force your eyes to weep,
Whilst you behold true desolation.
A rocky desolation shall pierce your eyes,
Where all at once one reaches where he stands,
With brows the roof, both walls with both his hands.
" *Aurelia.* It is too good. Blessed spirit of my lord!
O in what orb soe'er thy soul is thron'd,
Behold me worthily most miserable!
O let the anguish of my contrite spirit
Intreat some reconciliation:
If not, O joy, triumph in my just grief,
Death is the end of woes, and tears relief.
" *Pietro.* Belike your lord not lov'd you, was unkind.
"*Aurelia.* O heaven!
As the soul lov'd the body, so lov'd he:
'T was death to him to part my presence,
Heaven to see me pleased.
Yet I, like to a wretch given o'er to hell,
Brake all the sacred rites of marriage,
To clip a base ungentle faithless villain.
O God! a very pagan reprobate—
What should I say! ungrateful, throws me out,
From whom I lost soul, body, fame and honour.
But 't is most fit: why should a better fate
Attend on any who forsakes chaste sheets;
Fly the embrace of a devoted heart,
Join'd by a solemn vow 'fore God and man,
To taste the brackish blood of beastly lust,
In an adulterous touch? O ravenous immodesty!
Insatiate impudence of appetite!
Look here 's your end, for mark what sap in dust,
What good in sin, even so much love in lust.
Joy to thy ghost, sweet lord; pardon to me."

Marston was a satirist, as well as a dramatic poet; and was second only to bishop Hall.

4. *Thomas Decker* was another of the dramatists

whose fortune it was to quarrel with Ben Jonson. He was ridiculed under the name of *Demetrius* in *The Poetaster*, just as Marston was ridiculed under that of *Crispinus*. In revenge, he wrote his *Satiromastix*, but he was unable to cope with his powerful antagonist. He was a voluminous writer. He wrote many pamphlets, and many dramas. But more still of the latter were written in conjunction with other men, — with Chettle, Drayton, Munday, Webster, and Middleton. As a dramatist, he has great facility; he is not without comic humour; and he is familiar with low life. But he has no genius; he is often coarse; and he mistakes obscenity for wit. *The Honest Whore*, which we do not feel disposed to notice, is a fair specimen of his talent. Like most of his literary contemporaries, he seems to have been a child of poverty; some years he passed in the King's Bench prison. The time of his death is unknown; it was probably about the year 1640.

5. Of *Thomas Heywood* we know little more than that he was the most diligent playwright that this country ever had. No fewer than one hundred and twenty dramas have been ascribed to his pen; but of these, twenty-six only, being all that were published, have descended to us. He who wrote thus rapidly was not likely to write well; and from the few plays of his which we have read, we see no reason to regret the loss of the rest. *The Four 'Prentices of London*, and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, were the most popular of his dramas. We have no great opinion of either. Yet Heywood was a scholar; he was, we are told, a fellow of Peter-house, Cambridge; and we must lament the perversity of taste which caused him to exchange so honourable a station for that of third-rate dramatist and actor. He was a miscellaneous as well as dramatic writer.

6. Whether *William Rowley* be the man of that name "once a rare scholar of Pembroke-hall, Cambridge," may well be doubted. Such a one would

scarcely leave learning and the way to preferment, for an author's drudgery and the precarious hopes of the dramatic life. As a player, we hear of him in the company of prince Henry. As a dramatist he is rather known from his co-operation with Middleton, Fletcher, Massinger, and Decker, than for his own compositions. Yet he wrote several, of which four at least were printed, and some which were never published. His *Match at Midnight* is said to be the most tolerable of his performances. It is not without comic power; it gives us no little insight into the manners of the times; and it has some striking scenes. Here its praise must end.

7. *Nathaniel Field* may be placed in the same rank as Rowley, Middleton, and Decker. He, too, co-operated with other writers in the production of several pieces. For two of his own he is most read, — *A Woman's a Weathercock*, and *Amends for Ladies*. These we have not read, and we shall therefore give no opinion respecting them. Of the author, nothing is known but that he was cotemporary with Massinger, Shirley, and Ford.

8. *Thomas May* is more celebrated as an historian and a political adherent of the Roundheads, than for his dramatic talents. These place him merely with the third, or even fourth, rate writers of his age. *The Heir* and *The Old Couple* are well known, but they will scarcely bear a perusal. He had, however, a very classical taste (he was of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge); he had some reading; and he excelled as a translater. His *Lucan* was highly praised. But neither for his poetry nor his translations did he succeed so well in the world as for his political tendencies. It may, however, be doubted whether the zeal he exhibited in behalf of the parliament was the result of conviction. His aversion to the court arose, we are told, from his being refused the post of laureate, which was conferred on Davenant. However this be, he was a great favourite with the regicides, and on his death, in 1650, he was magnificently interred in Westminster Abbey.

After the Restoration, however, his bones, with those of many others, were dug up, and thrown into a pit near St. Margaret's church.

9. Of *Robert Davenport*, who died about two years before Shirley, we know nothing except that he wrote about nine plays, one of which, *The City Night Cap*, is familiar to the readers of Dodsley's Collection.

10. *William Cartwright* was superior in dramatic merit to many of the preceding. Whether he was of Northway in Gloucestershire, and born in 1611, as Wood affirms, or of Burford in Oxfordshire, and born in 1615, as Lloyd assures us, we need not inquire. By the former writer, his father is said to have been so much reduced in circumstances, as to be fain to keep an inn at Cirencester. However this be, he had excellent means of education. From the grammar school at Cirencester, he was sent to Westminster; and from Westminster to Christ Church, Oxford, where he prosecuted his studies with much reputation. In what year he embraced holy orders we are not informed; but we are told that he was an eminent preacher, and that, in his post of metaphysical reader, he gave unmixed satisfaction. He must, indeed, have been a man of great acquirements, or bishop Fell would not have said that he was "the utmost man could come to." Nor would Ben Jonson have called him by the endearing name of "son," and declared that he wrote every thing "like a man." His virtues are said to have been equal to his learning. Had he lived, he would certainly have been raised to the bench. The last mark of honour which his university conferred on him, that of junior proctor, he only survived six months. He died of a malignant fever in 1643, before he had reached the prime of life; and his death gave much pain to the university, and even, we are told, to the court, which happened then to be at Oxford.

But if Cartwright was thus eminent as a scholar, we have yet to learn that he has many claims as a dramatist. Four of his English plays—probably all that he wrote

— we have read; but we cannot, in conscience, term him a man of genius. If his good taste, his knowledge of critical rules, prevent him from sinking below mediocrity, he is never sublime; his plots are defective; he has little knowledge of life, and less of the human heart. But his sentiments are just, his language is forcible, his versification vigorous; and if he be not well adapted for the stage, he will be read in the closet.

Of some inferior writers, as *Suckling, Brome, Marmion, Habington, Randolph, Fisher, Tomkis, Cook, Brewer, Wilkins, Barry, Taylor,* we have neither the space nor the desire to say one word. If the reader wishes to know more of them, he may to a certain extent be gratified by wading through Dodsley's Collection.

APPENDIX.

A.

COMPLETE COPY OF THE VERSES ON SIR THOMAS LUCY.

A parliement member, a justice of peace,
At home a poore scarecrowe, in London an asse,
If Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

He thinks hymself greate, yet an asse in hys state
We allowe bye his eares but with asses to mate;
If Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

He 's a haughty proud insolent knighte of the shire
At home nobodye loves, yet theres many hym feare.
If Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

To the sessions he went and dyd sorely complain
His parke had been rob'd and his deer they were slain.
This Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

He sayd twas a ryot his men had been beat,
His venson was stole and clandestinely eat.
Soe Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

Soe haughty was he when the fact was confess'd
He sayd 'twas a crime that could not bee redress'd,
Soe Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

Though Lucies a dozen he paints in his coat
His name it shall Lowsie for Lucy be wrote
For Lucy is Lowsie as some volke misscall it
Synge Lowsie Lucy whatever befall it.

If a iuvenile frolick he cannot forgive
We 'll synge Lowsie Lucy as long as we live
And Lucy the Lowsie a libel may call it
We 'll synge Lowsie Lncy whatever befall it.

B.

SHAKSPEARE'S WILL.

FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE OFFICE OF THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

Vicesimo quinto die Martii, Anno Regni Domini nostri Jacobi nunc Regis Angliæ, &c. decimo quarto, et Scotiæ quadragesimo nono. Anno Domini 1616.

In the name of God, Amen. I William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent. in perfect health and memory (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and statement in manner and form following; that is to say:

First, I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping, and assuredly believing through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting; and my body to the earth whereof it is made.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Judith, one hundred and fifty pounds of lawful English money, to be paid unto her in manner and form following; that is to say, one hundred pounds in discharge of her marriage portion within one year after my decease, with consideration after the rate of two shillings in the pound for so long time as the same shall be unpaid unto her after my decease; and the fifty pounds residue thereof, upon her surrendering of, or giving of such sufficient security as the overseers of this my will shall like of, to surrender or grant, all her estate and right that shall descend or come unto her after my decease, or that she now hath, of, in, or to, one copyhold tenement, with the appurtenances, lying and being in Stratford-upon-Avon aforesaid, in the said county of Warwick, being parcel or holden of the manor of Rowington, unto my daughter Susannah Hall, and her heirs for ever.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said daughter Judith, one hundred and fifty pounds more, if she, or any issue of her body, be living at the end of three years next ensuing the day of the date of this my will, during which time my executors to pay her consideration from my decease according to the rate aforesaid: and if she die within the said term without issue of

her body, then my will is, and I do give and bequeath one hundred pounds to my niece Elizabeth Hall, and the fifty pounds to be set forth by my executors during the life of my sister Joan Hart, and the use and profit thereof coming, shall be paid to my said sister Joan, and after her decease the said fifty pounds shall remain amongst the children of my said sister, equally to be divided amongst them; but if my said daughter Judith be living at the end of the said three years, or any issue of her body, then my will is, and so I devise and bequeath the said hundred and fifty pounds to be set out by my executors and overseers for the best benefit of her and her issue, and the stock not to be paid unto her so long as she shall be married and covert baron; but my will is, that she shall have the consideration yearly paid unto her during her life, and after her decease the said stock and consideration to be paid to her children, if she have any, and if not, to her executors or assigns, she living the said term after my decease: provided that if such husband as she shall at the end of the said three years be married unto, or at any [time] after, do sufficiently assure unto her, and the issue of her body, lands answerable to the portion by this my will given unto her, and to be adjudged so by my executors and overseers, then my will is, that the said hundred and fifty pounds shall be paid to such husband as shall make such assurance, to his own use.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said sister Joan twenty pounds, and all my wearing apparel, to be paid and delivered within one year after my decease; and I do will and devise unto her the house, with the appurtenances, in Stratford, wherein she dwelleth, for her natural life, under the yearly rent of twelve-pence.

Item, I give and bequeath unto her three sons, William Hart, —— Hart, and Michael Hart, five pounds a piece, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath unto the said Elizabeth Hall, all my plate (except my broad silver and gilt bowl) that I now have at the date of this my will.

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of Stratford aforesaid ten pounds; to Mr. Thomas Combe my sword; to Thomas Russel, esq. five pounds; and to Francis Collins, of the borough of Warwick, in the county of Warwick, gent. thirteen pounds six shillings and eight-pence, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath to Hamlet [*Hamnet*] Sadler, twenty-six shillings eight pence, to buy him a ring; to William Reynolds, gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring; to my godson, William Walker, twenty shillings in gold;

to Anthony Nash, gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence; and to Mr. John Nash, twenty-six shillings eight-pence; and to my fellows, John Hemynge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell, twenty-six shillings eight-pence apiece, to buy them rings.

Item, I give, will, bequeath, and devise, unto my daughter, Susannah Hall, for better enabling of hen to perform this my will, and towards the performance thereof, all that capital messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, in Stratford aforesaid, called The New Place, wherein I now dwell, and two messuages or tenements, with the appurtenances, situate, lying, and being in Henley-street, within the borough of Stratford aforesaid; and all my barns, stables, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever, situate, lying, and being, or to be had, received, perceived, or taken, within the towns, hamlets, villages, fields, and grounds of Stratford-upon-Avon, Old Stratford, Bishopston, and Welcombe, or in any of them, in the said county of Warwick; and also all that messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, situate, lying, and being, in the Blackfriars in London, near the Wardrobe. and all other my lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever: to have and to hold all and singular the said premises, with their appurtenances, unto the said Susannah Hall, for and during the term of her natural life; and after her decease to the first son of her body lawfully issuing, and to the heirs-males of the body of the said first son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the second son of her body lawfully issuing, and to the heirs-males of the body of the said second son lawfully issuing; and for default of such heirs, to the third son of the body of the said Susannah lawfully issuing, and to the heirs-males of the body of the said third son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, the same so to be and remain to the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons of her body lawfully issuing, one after another, and to the heirs-males of the bodies of the said fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons lawfully issuing, in such manner as it is before limited to be and remain to the first, second, and third sons of her body, and to their heirs-males; and for default of such issue, the said premises to be and remain to my said niece Hall, and the heirs-males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to my daughter Judith, and the heirs-males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the right heirs of me the said William Shakspeare for ever.

Item, I give unto my wife my second best bed, with the furniture.

Item, I give and bequeath to my said daughter Judith, my broad silver-gilt bowl. All the rest of my goods, chattels, leases, plate, jewels, and household stuff whatsoever, after my debts and legacies paid, and my funeral expences discharged, I give, devise, and bequeath to my son-in-law, John Hall, gent. and my daughter, Susannah, his wife, whom I ordain and make executors of this my last will and testament. And I do entreat and appoint the said Thomas Russell, esq. and Francis Collins, gent. to be overseers hereof. And do revoke all former wills, and publish this to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I have hereunto put my hand, the day and year first above written.

By me WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

Witness to the publishing hereof,
Fra. Collyns,
Julius Shaw,
John Robinson,
Hamnet Sadler,
Robert Whatcott.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London, coram Magistro William Byrde, Legum Doctore, &c. vicesimo secundo die mensis Junii, Anno Domini, 1616, *juramento Johannis Hall unius ex. cui, &c. de bene, &c. jurat. reservata potestate, &c. Susannæ Hall, alt. ex. &c. eam cum venerit, &c. petitur, &c.*

C.

AN ESSAY ON THE LEARNING OF SHAKSPEARE, ADDRESSED TO JOSEPH CRADOCK, ESQ.

"SHAKSPEARE," says a brother of the *craft*, "is a vast garden of criticism:" and certainly no one can be favoured with more weeders *gratis*.

But how often, my dear sir, are weeds and flowers torn up indiscriminately?—the ravaged spot is replanted in a moment, and a provision of critical thorns thrown over it for security.

"A prudent man, therefore, would not venture his fingers amongst them"

Be, however, in little pain for your friend, who regards himself sufficiently to be cautious:—yet he asserts with confidence,

that no improvement can be expected, whilst the natural soil is mistaken for a hot-bed, and the natives of the banks of Avon are scientifically choked with the culture of exoticks.

Thus much for metaphor; it is contrary to the statute to fly out so early: but who can tell, whether it may not be demonstrated by some critick or other, that a deviation from rule is peculiarly happy in an Essay on Shakspeare!

You have long known my opinion concerning the literary acquisitions of our immortal dramatist; and remember how I congratulated myself on my coincidence with the last and best of his editors. I told you, however, that his "small Latin and less Greek" would still be litigated, and you see very assuredly that I was not mistaken. The trumpet hath been sounded against "the darling project of representing Shakspeare as one of the illiterate vulgar; and indeed to so good purpose, that I would by all means recommend the performer to the army of the braying faction, recorded by Cervantes. The testimony of his contemporaries is again disputed; constant tradition is opposed by flimsy arguments; and nothing is heard, but confusion and nonsense. One could scarcely imagine this a topick very likely to inflame the passions: it is asserted by Dryden, that "those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greatest commendation;" yet an attack upon an article of faith hath been usually received with more temper and complacence, than the unfortunate opinion which I am about to defend.

But let us previously lament, with every lover of Shakspeare, that the question was not fully discussed by Mr. Johnson himself: what he sees intuitively, others must arrive at by a series of proofs; and I have not time to *teach* with precision; be contented therefore with a few cursory observations, as they may happen to arise from the chaos of papers, you have so often laughed at "a stock sufficient to set up an *editor in form.*" I am convinced of the strength of my cause, and superior to any little advantage from sophistical arrangements.

General positions without proofs will probably have no great weight on either side, yet it may not seem fair to suppress them; take them therefore as their authors occur to me, and we will afterward proceed to particulars.

The testimony of Ben. stands foremost; and some have held it sufficient to decide the controversy; in the warmest panegyrick that ever was written, he apologizes for what he supposed the only defect in his "beloved friend,—

- —— Soul of the age!
Th' applause! delight! the wonder of our stage!'—

whose memory he honoured almost to idolatry:" and conscious of the worth of ancient literature, like any other man on the same occasion, he rather carries his acquirements *above* than *below* the truth. "Jealousy!" cries Mr. Upton; "people will allow others any qualities, but those upon which they highly value themselves." Yes, where there *is* a competition, and the competitor formidable; but, I think, this critick himself hath scarcely set in opposition the learning of Shakspeare and Jonson. When a superiority is universally granted, it by no means appears a man's literary interest to depress the reputation of his antagonist.

In truth, the received opinion of the pride and malignity of Jonson, at least in the earlier part of life, is absolutely groundless: at this time scarce a play or a poem appeared without Ben's encomium, from the original Shakspeare to the translator of Du Bartas.

But Jonson is by no means our only authority. Drayton, the countryman and acquaintance of Shakspeare, determines his excellence to the *naturall braine* only. Digges, a wit of the town, before our poet left the stage, is very strong to the purpose,

"—— Nature only helpt him, for looke thorow
This whole book, thou shalt find he doth not borow
One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,
Nor once from vulgar languages translate."

Suckling opposed his "easier strain" to the "sweat of the learned Jonson." Denham assures us, that all he had was from "old mother-wit." "His native wood-notes wild," every one remembers to be celebrated by Milton. Dryden observes prettily enough, that "he wanted not the spectacles of books to read nature." He came out of her hand, as some one else expresses it, like Pallas out of Jove's head, at full growth and mature.

The ever memorable Hales of Eton, (who, notwithstanding his epithet, is, I fear, almost forgotton,) had too great a knowledge both of Shakspeare and the ancients to allow much acquaintance between them: and urged very justly on the part of genius in opposition to pedantry, that "if he had not *read* the classicks, he had likewise not *stolen* from them; and if any topick was produced from a poet of antiquity, he would undertake to show somewhat on the same subject, as least as well written by Shakspeare."

Fuller, a diligent and equal searcher after truth and quibbles, declares positively, that "his learning was very little, — *nature* was all the *art* used upon him, as *he himself*, if alive, would confess." And may we not say, he did confess it, when he

apologized for his *untutored lines* to his noble patron the earl of Southampton? — this list of witnesses might be easily enlarged; but I flatter myself, I shall stand in no need of such evidence.

One of the first and most vehement assertors of the learning of Shakspeare, was the editor of his poems, the well-known Mr. Gildon: and his steps were most punctually taken by a subsequent labourer in the same department, Dr. Sewell.

Mr. Pope supposed, "little ground for the common opinion of his want of learning:" once indeed he made a proper distinction between *learning* and *languages*, as I would be understood to do in my title-page; but unfortunately he forgot it in the course of his disquisition, and endeavoured to persuade himself that Shakspeare's acquaintance with the ancients might be actually proved by the same medium as Jonson's.

Mr. Theobald is "very unwilling to allow him so poor a scholar, as many have laboured to represent him;" and yet is "cautious of declaring too positively on the other side of the question."

Dr. Warburton hath exposed the weakness of some arguments from *suspected* imitations; and yet offers others, which, I doubt not, he could as easily have refuted.

Mr. Upton wonders "with what kind of reasoning any one could be so far imposed upon, as to imagine that Shakspeare had no learning;" and lashes with much zeal and saitsfaction "the pride and pertness of dunces, who, under such a name would gladly shelter their own idleness and ignorance."

He, like the learned knight, at every anomaly in grammar or metre,

> "Hath hard words ready to show why,
> And tell what *rule* he did it by."

How would the old bard have been astonished to have found, that he had very skilfully given the *trochaic dimeter brachycatalectic, commonly* called the *ithyphallic* measure to the Witches in Macbeth! and that now and then a halting verse afforded a most beautiful instance of the *pes proceleusmaticus!*

"But," continues Mr. Upton, "it was a learned age; Roger Ascham assures us, that queen Elizabeth read more Greek every day, than some *dignitaries* of the church did Latin in a whole week." This appears very probable; and a pleasant proof it is of the general learning of the times, and of Shakspeare in particular. I wonder he did not corroborate it with an extract from her injunctions to her clergy, that "such as were but *mean readers* should peruse over before, once or twice, the chapters and homilies, to the intent they might read to the better understanding of the people."

Dr. Grey declares, that Shakspeare's knowledge in the Greek and Latin tongues cannot *reasonably* be called in question. Dr. Dodd supposes it proved, that he was not such a novice in learning and antiquity as *some people* would pretend. And to close the whole, for I suspect you to be tired of quotation, Mr. Whalley, the ingenious editor of Jonson, hath written a piece expressly on this side the question: perhaps from a very excusable partiality, he was willing to draw Shakspeare from the field of nature to classick ground, where alone, he knew, his author could possibly cope with him.

These criticks, and many others their coadjutators, have supposed themselves able to trace Shakspeare in the writings of the ancients; and have sometimes persuaded us of their own learning, whatever became of their author's. Plagiarisms have been discovered in every natural description and every moral sentiment. Indeed, by the kind assistance of the various Excerpta, Sententiæ, and Flores, this business may be effected with very little expence of time or sagacity; as Addison hath demonstrated in his comment on Chevy Chase, and Wagstaff on Tom Thumb; and I myself will engage to give you quotations from the elder English writers (for to own the truth, I was once idle enough to collect such), which shall carry with them at least an equal degree of similarity. But there can be no occasion of wasting any future time in this department; the world is now in possession of the Marks of Imitation.

"Shakspeare, however, hath frequent allusions to the *facts* and *fables* of antiquity." Granted: — and as Mat. Prior says, to save the effusion of more Christian ink, I will endeavour to show how they came to his acquaintance.

It is notorious, that much of his *matter of fact* knowledge is deduced from Plutarch: but in what language he read him, hath yet been the question. Mr. Upton is pretty confident of his skill in the original, and corrects accordingly the *errors of his copyists* by the Greek standard. Take a few instances, which will elucidate this matter sufficiently.

In the third Act of Antony and Cleopatra, Octavius represents to his courtiers the imperial pomp of those illustrious lovers, and the arrangement of their dominion,

> "Unto her
> He gave the 'stablishment of Egypt, made her
> Of lower Syria, Cyprus, *Lydia*,
> Absolute queen."

Read *Libya*, says the critick *authoritatively*, as is plain from Plutarch.

This is very true: Mr. Heath accedes to the correction, and Mr. Johnson admits it into the text; but turn to the translation,

from the French of Amyot, by Thomas North, in folio, 1579 and you will at once see the origin of the mistake.

"First of all he did establish Cleopatra queene of Ægypt, of Cyprus, of *Lydia*, and the lower Syria."

Again, in the fourth Act,

> My messenger
> He hath whipt with rods, dares me to personal combat,
> Cæsar to Antony. Let th' old ruffian know
> I have many other ways to die; mean time
> Laugh at his challenge ——."

"What a reply is this?" cries Mr. Upton, "'tis acknowledging he should fall under the unequal combat. But if we read,

> "—— Let the old ruffian know
> *He* hath many other ways to die; mean time
> *I* laugh at his challenge—— "

we have the poignancy and the very repartee of Cæsar in Plutarch."

This correction was first made by sir Thomas Hanmer, and Mr. Johnson hath received it. Most indisputably it is the sense of Plutarch, and given so in the modern translation; but Shakspeare was misled by the ambiguity of the old one: "Antonius sent again to challenge Cæsar to fight him: Cæsar answered, That *he* had many other ways to die, than so."

In the third Act of Julius Cæsar, Antony, in his well-known harangue to the people, repeats a part of the emperor's will:

> "——! To every Roman citizen he gives,
> To every sev'ral man, seventy-five drachmas.——
> Moreover he hath left you all his walks,
> His private arbours, and new-planted orchards,
> On *this* side Tiber ——."

"Our author certainly wrote," says Mr. Theobald, — "On *that* side Tiber—

> '*Trans* Tiberim — prope Cæsaris hortos.'

And Plutarch, whom Shakspeare very diligently studied, expressly declares, that he left the publick his gardens and walks, πέραν τοῦ Ποταμοῦ, *beyond* the Tyber."

This emendation likewise hath been adopted by the subsequent editors; but hear again the old translation, where Shakspeare's *study* lay: "He bequeathed unto every citizen of Rome seventy-five drachmas a man, and he left his gardens and arbours unto the people, which he had on *this* side of the river of Tyber." I could furnish you with many more instances, but these are as good as a thousand.

Hence had our author his characteristick knowledge of Brutus and Antony, upon which much argumentation for his learning had been founded; and hence *literatim* the epitaph on Timon, which it was once presumed he had corrected from the blunders of the Latin version, by his own superior knowledge of the original.

I cannot, however, omit a passage from Mr. Pope: "The *speeches* copied from Plutarch in Coriolanus may, I think, be as well made an instance of the learning of Shakspeare, as those copy'd from Cicero in Catiline, of Ben Jonson's." Let us inquire into this matter, and transcribe a *speech* for a specimen. Take the famous one of Volumnia:

"Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies would bewray what life
We've led since thy exile. Think with thyself,
How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither; since thy sight, which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
Constrains them weep, and shake with fear and sorrow;
Making the mother, wife, and child to see
The son, the husband, and the father tearing
His country's bowels out: and to poor we
Thy enmity 's most capital; thou barr'st us
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
That all but we enjoy. For how can we,
Alas! how can we, for our country pray,
Whereto we're bound, together with thy victory,
Whereto we're bound? Alack! or we must lose
The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
Our comfort in the country. We must find
An eminent calamity, though we had
Our wish, which side should win. For either thou
Must, as a foreign recreant, be led
With manacles thorough our streets; or else
Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,
And bear the palm, for having bravely shed
Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,
I purpose not to wait on fortune, till
These wars determine: if I can't persuade thee
Rather to show a noble grace to both parts,
Than seek the end of one; thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country, than to tread
(Trust to't, thou shalt not,) on thy mother's womb,
That brought thee to this world."

I will now give you the old translation, which shall effectually confute Mr. Pope; for our author hath done little more than thrown the very words of North into blank verse.

"If we helde our peace (my sonne) and determined not to speake, the state of our poore bodies, and present sight of our rayment, would easely bewray to thee what life we haue led at home, since thy exile and abode abroad. But thinke now with thy selfe, howe much more unfortunately, then all the women liuinge we are come hether, considering that the sight which

should be most pleasaunt to all other to beholde, spitefull fortune hath made most fearfull to us: making my selfe to see my sonne, and my daughter here, her husband, besieging the walles of his natiue countrie. So as that which is the only comfort to all other in their adversitie and miserie, to pray unto the goddess, and to call to them for aide; is the onely thinge which plongeth us into most deepe perplexitie. For we cannot (alas) together pray, both for victorie, for our countrie, and for safety of thy life also; but a worlde of grievous curses, yea more than any mortall enemie can heappe uppon us, are forcibly wrapt up in our prayers. For the bitter soppe of most harde choyce is offered thy wife and children, to foregoe the one of the two: either to lose the persone of thy selfe, or the nurse of their natiue contrie. For my selfe (my sonne) I am determined not to tarrie, till fortune in my life time doe make an ende of this warre. For if I cannot persuade thee, rather to doe good unto both parties, than to ouerthrowe and destroye the one, preferring loue and nature before the malice and calamitie of warres: thou shall see, my sonne, and trust unto it, thou shalt no soner marche forward to assault thy countrie, but thy foote shall tread upon thy mother's wombe, that brought thee first into this world."

The length of this quotation will be excused for its curiosity, and it happily wants not the assistance of a comment. But matters may not always be so easily managed — a plagiarism from Anacreon hath been detected:

" The sun 's a thief, and with his great attraction
Robs the vast sea. The moon 's an arrant thief,
And her pale fire she snatches from the sun.
The sea 's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
The moon into salt tears. The earth 's a thief,
That feeds and breeds by a composture stol'n
From gen'ral excrement: each thing 's a thief."

"This (says Dr. Dodd) is a good deal in the manner of the celebrated *drinking Ode*, too well known to be inserted." Yet it may be alledged by those, who imagine Shakspeare to have been generally able to think for himself, that the topicks are obvious, and their application is different. But for argument's sake, let the parody be granted; and "our author (says some one) may be puzzled to prove, that there was a Latin translation of Anacreon at the time Shakspeare wrote his Timon of Athens." This challenge is peculiarly unhappy; for I do not at present recollect any *other classick*, (if, indeed, with great deference to Mynheer De Pauw, Anacreon may be numbered amongst them,) that was *originally* published with *two* Latin translations.

But this is not all. Puttenham in his Arte of English

Poesie, 1589, quotes some one of a "reasonable good facilitie in translation, who finding *certaine* of Anacreon's Odes very well translated by Ronsard, the French poet — comes our minion, and translates the same out of French into English." and his strictures upon him evince the publication. Now this identical ode is to be met with in Ronsard! and as his works are in few hands, I will take the liberty of transcribing it.

> "La terre les eaux va boivant,
> L'arbre la boit par sa racine,
> La mer salee boit le vent,
> Et le soleil boit la marine.
> Le soleil est beu de la lune,
> Tout boit soit en haut ou en bas:
> Suivant ceste reigle commune,
> Pourquoy donc ne boirons-nous pas?"
>
> Edit. Fol. p. 507.

I know not whether an observation or two, relative to our author's acquaintance with Homer, be worth our investigation. The ingenious Mrs. Lenox observes on a passage of Troilus and Cressida, where Achilles is roused to battle by the death of Patroclus, that Shakspeare must *here* have had the *Iliad* in view, as "the old story, which in many places he hath faithfully copied, is absolutely silent with respect to this circumstance."

And Mr. Upton is positive that the *sweet oblivious antidote*, inquired after by Macbeth, could be nothing but the *nepenthe* described in the Odyssey,

> Νηπενθές τ' αχολον τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἁπάντων.

I will not insist upon the translations by Chapman; as the first editions are without date, and it may be difficult to ascertain the exact time of their publication. But the *former* circumstance might have been learned from Alexander Barclay; and the *former* more fully from Spenser, than from Homer himself.

"But Shakspeare," persists Mr. Upton, "hath more *Greek expressions.*" Indeed! — "We have one in Coriolanus:

> '— It is held
> That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
> Most dignifies the *haver*.'

and another in Macbeth, where Banquo addresses the weird sisters:

> '————————My noble partner
> You greet with present grace, and great prediction
> Of noble *having*.'

Gr. "Εχεια. — and πρὸς τὸν "Εχοντα, to the *haver*."

This was the common language of Shakspeare's time. "Lye

in a water-bearer's house!" says Master Mathew of Bobadil, "a gentleman of his *havings!*"

Thus likewise John Davies, in his Pleasant Descant upon English Proverbs, printed with his Scourge of Folly, about 1612:

> "*Do well and have well!*—neyther so still:
> For some are good *doers*, whose *havings* are ill."

and Daniel the historian uses it frequently. *Having* seems to be synonymous with *behaviour* in Gawin Douglas and the elder Scotch writers.

Haver, in his sense of *possessor*, is every where met with: though unfortunately the πρὸς τὸν Ἔχοντα of Sophocles produced as an authority for it, is suspected by Kuster, as good a critick in these matters, to have absolutely a different meaning.

But what shall we say to the learning of the Clown in Hamlet, "Ay, tell me that, that *unyoke?*" alluding to the Βουλυτὸς of the Greeks; and Homer and his scholiast are quoted accordingly!

If it be not sufficient to say, with Dr. Warburton, that the phrase might have been taken from husbandry, without much depth of reading; we may produce it from a Dittie of the workmen of Dover, preserved in the additions to Holinshed, p. 1546:

> "My bow is broke, I would *unyoke*,
> My foot is sore, I can worke no more."

An expression of my Dame Quickley is next fastened upon, which you may look for in vain in the modern text; she calls some of the pretended fairies in The Merry Wives of Windsor,

> "*Orphan* heirs of fixed Destiny."

"And how elegant is this," quoth Mr. Upton, supposing the word to be used, as a Grecian would have used it? "ὀρφανὸς ab ὀρφνὸς—acting in darkness and obscurity."

Mr. Heath assures us, that the bare mention of such an interpretation, is a sufficient refutation of it; and his critical word will be rather taken in Greek than in English: in the same hands, therefore, I will venture to leave all our author's knowledge of the *old comedy*, and his etymological learning in the word, *Desdemona*.

Surely poor Mr. Upton was very little acquainted with *fairies*, notwithstanding his laborious study of Spenser. The last authentick account of them is from our countryman William Lilly; and it by no means agrees with the *learned*

interpretation; for the *angelical creatures* appeared in his *Hurst* wood in a *most illustrious glory*, — "and indeed, (says the sage,) it is not given to many persons to endure their *glorious aspects*."

The only use of transcribing these things, is to show what absurdities men for ever run into, when they lay down an hypothesis, and afterward seek for arguments in the support of it. What else could induce this man, by no means a bad scholar, to doubt whether *Truepenny* might not be derived from Τρύπανον; and quote upon us with much parade an old scholiast on Aristophanes? — I will not stop to confute him: nor take any notice of two or three more expressions, in which he was pleased to suppose some learned meaning or other; all which he might have found in every writer of the time, or still more easily in the vulgar translation of the Bible, by consulting the Concordance of Alexander Cruden.

But whence have we the plot of Timon, except from the Greek of Lucian? — The editors and criticks have never been at a greater loss than in their inquiries of this sort; and the source of a tale hath been often in vain sought abroad, which might easily have been found at home: my good friend, the very ingenious editor of the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, hath shown our author to have been sometimes contented with a legendary *ballad*.

The story of the misanthrope is told in almost every collection of the time; and particularly in two books, with which Shakspeare was intimately acquainted; the *Palace of* Pleasure, and the English Plutarch. Indeed, from a passage in an old play, called Jack Drum's Entertainment, I conjecture that he had before made his appearance on the stage.

Were this a proper place for such a disquisition, I could give you many cases of this kind. Were we sent, for instance, to Cinthio for the plot of Measure for Measure, and Shakspeare's judgment hath been attacked for some deviations from him in the conduct of it; when probably all he knew of the matter was from madam Isabella in the Heptameron of Whetstone. Ariosto is continually quoted for the fable of Much Ado about Nothing; but I suspect our poet to have been satisfied with the Geneura of Turberville. As you Like It was certainly borrowed, if we believe Dr. Grey, and Mr. Upton, from the Coke's Tale of Gamelyn; which by the way was not printed till a century afterward: when in truth the old bard, who was no hunter of MSS. contented himself solely with Lodge's Rosalynd, or Euphues' Golden Legacye, quarto, 1590. The story of All's Well that Ends Well, or, as I suppose it to have been sometimes called, Love's Labour Wonne, is origin-

ally indeed the property of Boccace, but it came immediately to Shakspeare from Painter's Giletta of Narbon. Mr. Langbaine could not conceive, whence the story of Pericles could be taken, "not meeting in history with any such prince of Tyre;" yet his legend may be found at large in old Gower, under the name of Appolynus.

Pericles is one of the plays omitted in the latter editions, as well as the early folios: and not improperly, though it was published many years before the death of Shakspeare, with his name in the title-page. Aulus Gellius informs us, that some plays are ascribed absolutely to Plautus, which he only *retouched* and *polished;* and this is undoubtedly the case with our author likewise. The revival of this performance, which Ben Jonson calls *stale* and *mouldy*, was probably his earliest attempt in the drama. I know that another of these discarded pieces, The Yorkshire Tragedy, hath been frequently called so; but most certainly it was not written by our poet at all: nor indeed was it printed in his life-time. The fact on which it is built, was perpetrated no sooner than 1604; much too late for so mean a performance from the hand of Shakspeare.

Sometimes a very little matter detects a forgery. You may remember a play called The Double Falsehood, which Mr. Theobald was desirous of palming upon the world for a posthumous one of Shakspeare; and I see it is classed as such in the last edition of the Bodleian catalogue. Mr. Pope himself, after all the strictures of Scriblerus, in a letter to Aaron Hill, supposes it of that age; but a mistaken accent determines it to have been written since the middle of the last century:

> "This late example
> Of base Henriquez, bleeding in me now,
> From each good *áspect* takes away my trust."

And in another place,

> "You have an *áspect*, sir, of wondrous wisdom."

The word *aspect*, you perceive, is here accented on the *first* syllable, which, I am confident, in *any* sense of it, was never the case in the time of Shakspeare; though it may sometimes appear to be so, when we do not observe a preceding *elision*.

Some of the professed imitators of our old poets have not attended to this and many other *minutiæ;* I could point out to you several performances in the respective styles of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, which the *imitated* bard could not possibly have either read or construed.

This very accent has troubled the annotators on Milton. Dr.

Bentley observes it to be "a *tone* different from the present use." Mr. Manwaring, in his Treatise of Harmony and Numbers, very solemnly informs us, that "this verse is defective both in accent and quantity, B. III. v. 266:

> "His words here ended, but his meek *aspêct*
> Silent yet spake.——"

Here (says he) a syllable is *acuted* and *long*, whereas it should be *short* and *graved!*"

And a still more extraordinary gentleman, one Green, who published a specimen of a new version of the Paradise Lost, into *blank* verse, "by which that amazing work is brought somewhat nearer the summit of perfection," begins with correcting a blunder in the fourth Book, v. 540:

> "———— The setting sun
> Slowly descended, and with right *aspêct*—
> Levell'd his evening rays.——"

Not so in the *new version:*

> "Meanwhile the setting sun descending slow—
> Level'd with *aspect* right his ev'ning rays."

Enough of such commentators.——The celebrated Dr. Dee had a *spirit*, who would sometimes condescend to correct him, when peccant in *quantity*. and it had been kind of him to have a little assisted the *wights* above-mentioned. Milton affected the *antique;* but it may seem more extraordinary, that the old accent should be adopted in Hudibras.

After all, the Double Falsehood is superior to Theobald. One passage, and only one in the whole play, he pretended to have written:

> "——— Strike up, my masters;
> But touch the strings with a religious softness:
> Teach sound to languish through the night's dull ear,
> Till melancholy start from her lazy couch,
> And carelessness grow convert to attention."

These lines were particularly admired; and his vanity could not resist the opportunity of claiming them; but his claim had been more easily allowed to *any other* part of the performance.

To whom then shall we ascribe it? Somebody hath told us, who should seem to be a *nostrum-monger* by his argument, that, let *accents* be how they will, it is called *an original play of William Shakspeare* in the *King's Patent* prefixed to Mr. Theobald's edition, 1728, and consequently there *could* be no fraud in the matter. Whilst, on the contrary, the *Irish* laureat, Mr. Victor, remarks, (and were it true, it would certainly be decisive,) that the plot is borrowed from a novel of Cervantes, not published till the year after Shakspeare's death. But unluckily

the same novel appears in a part of Don Quixote, which was printed in Spanish, 1605, and in English by Shelton, 1612.—The same reasoning, however, which exculpated our author from The Yorkshire Tragedy, may be applied on the present occasion.

But you want *my* opinion; and from every mark of style and manner, I make no doubt of ascribing it to Shirley. Mr. Langbaine informs us that he left some plays in MS.—These were written about the time of the Restoration, when the *accent* in question was more generally altered.

Perhaps the mistake arose from an *abbreviation* of the name. Mr. Dodsley knew not that the tragedy of Andromana was Shirley's, from the very same cause. Thus a whole stream of Biographers tells us, that Marston's plays were printed at London, 1633, "by the care of *William Shakspeare*, the famous comedian."—Here again I suppose, in some transcript, the real publisher's name, *William Sheares*, was *abbreviated*. No one hath protracted the life of Shakspeare beyond 1616, except Mr. Hume, who is pleased to add a year to it, in contradiction to all manner of evidence.

Shirley is spoken of with contempt in *Mac Flecknoe*; but his imagination is sometimes fine to an extraordinary degree. I recollect a passage in the fourth Book of the Paradise Lost, which hath been suspected of *imitation*, as a *prettiness* below the genius of Milton: I mean, where *Uriel* glides *backward and forward* to heaven on a *sun-beam*. Dr. Newton informs us, that this might possibly be hinted by a picture of Annibal Caracci, in the King of France's cabinet; but I am apt to believe that Milton had been struck with a portrait in Shirley. Fernando, in the comedy of The Brothers, 1652, describes Jacinta at *vespers*:—

"Her eye did seem to labour with a tear,
Which suddenly took birth, but overweigh'd
With its own swelling, drop'd upon her bosome;
Which by reflexion of her light, appear'd
As nature meant her sorrow for an ornament:
After, her looks grew cheerful, and I saw
A smile shoot graceful upward from her eyes,
As if they had gain'd a victory o'er grief,
And with it many *beams* twisted themselves,
Upon whose *golden threads the angels* walk
To and again from heaven.——"

You must not think me infected with the spirit of Lauder, if I give you another of Milton's imitations:—

"——— The swan *with arched neck*
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
Her state with oary feet."—Book VII. v. 438, &c.

"The ancient poets," says Mr. Richardson, "have not hit

upon this beauty ; so lavish have they been in their descriptions of the *swan*. Homer calls the swan *long-necked*, δουλιχοδείρου : but how much more *pittoresque*, if he had *arched* this length of neck ? "

For *this beauty*, however, Milton was beholden to Donne ; whose name, I believe, at present is better known than his writings :—

"Like a ship in her full trim,
A *swan*, so white that you may unto him
Compare all whitenesse, but himselfe to none,
Glided along, and as he glided watch'd,
And with his *arched neck* this poore fish catched.—"
Progresse of the Soul, st. 24.

Those highly-finished landscapes, the Seasons, are indeed copied from nature, but Thomson sometimes recollected the hand of his master :—

"The stately sailing swan
Gives out his snowy plumage to the gale ;
And arching proud his neck with oary feet,
Bears forward fierce, and guards his osier isle,
Protective of his young.——"

But *to return*, as we say on other occasions. Perhaps the advocates for Shakspeare's knowledge of the Latin language may be more successful. Mr. Gildon takes the van. "It is plain, that he was acquainted with the fables of antiquity very well ; that some of the arrows of Cupid are pointed with lead, and others with gold, he found in Ovid ; and what he speaks of Dido, in Virgil : nor do I know any translation of these poets so ancient as Shakspeare's time." The passages on which these sagacious remarks are made, occur in a Midsummer Night's Dream ; and exhibit, we see, a clear proof of acquaintance with the Latin classicks.

But we are not answerable for Mr. Gildon's ignorance ; he might have been told of Caxton and Douglas, of Surrey and Stanyhurst, of Phaer and Twyne, of Fleming and Golding, of Turberville and Churchyard ! but these fables were easily known without the help of either the originals or the translations. The fate of Dido had been sung very early by Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate ; Marlowe had even already introduced her to the stage : and Cupid's arrows appear with their characteristick differences in Surrey, in Sydney, in Spenser, and every sonnetteer of the time. Nay, their very names were exhibited long before in "The Romaunt of the Rose :" a work, you may venture to look into, notwithstanding Master Prynne hath so positively assured us, on the word of John Gerson, that the author is most certainly damned, if he did not care for a serious repentance.

Mr. Whalley argues in the same manner, and with the same success. He thinks a passage in The Tempest,

> High queen of state,
> Great Juno comes ; I know her by her *gait*,"

a remarkable instance of Shakspeare's knowledge of ancient poetick story; and that the hint was furnished by the *divûm incedo regina* of Virgil.

You know, honest John Taylor, the *Water-poet*, declares that *he never learned his Accidence*, and that *Latin and French* were to him *Heathen Greek*; yet by the help of Mr. Whalley's argument, I will prove him a learned man, in spite of every thing he may say to the contrary: for thus he makes a gallant address his lady:

" Most inestimable magazine of beauty —— in whom the port and majesty of Juno, the wisdom of Jove's brainebred girle, and the feature of Cytherea, have their domestical habitation."

In the Merchant of Venice, we have an oath " By two-headed Janus: " and here, says Dr. Warburton, Shakspeare shows his knowledge in the antique: and so again does the water-poet, who describes Fortune,

> " Like a Janus with a double face."

But Shakspeare hath somewhere a Latin motto, quoth Dr. Sewell; and so hath John Taylor, and a whole poem upon it into the bargain.

You perceive, my dear sir, how vague and indeterminate such arguments must be; for in fact this sweet swan of Thames, as Mr. Pope calls him, hath more scraps of Latin, and allusions to antiquity than are any where to be met with in the writings of Shakspeare. I am sorry to trouble you with trifles, yet what must be done, when grave men insist upon them?

It should seem to be the opinion of some modern criticks, that the personages of classick land begun only to be known in England in the time of Shakspeare; or rather, that he particularly had the honour of introducing them to the notice of his countrymen.

For instance,—" Rumour painted full of tongues," gives us a prologue to one of the parts of Henry the Fourth; and, says Dr. Dodd, Shakspeare had doubtless a view to either Virgil or Ovid in their description of Fame.

But why so? Stephen Hawes, in his Pastime of Pleasure had long before exhibited her in the same manner.

> " A goodly lady envyroned about
> With *tongues* of fyre.—— "

and so had Sir Thomas More in one of his Pageants :—

> " *Fame* I am called, mervayle you nothing
> Though with *tonges* I am compassed all rounde,"

not to mention her elaborate portrait by Chaucer, in The Boke of Fame; and by John Higgings, one of the assistants in the Mirrour for Magistrates, in his Legend of King Albanacte.

A very liberal writer on the Beauties of Poetry, who had been more conversant in the ancient literature of other countries, than his own, " cannot but wonder, that a poet, whose classical images are composed of the finest parts, and breathe the very spirit of ancient mythology, should pass for being illiterate : —

> " See, what a grace was seated on this brow !
> Hyperion's curls ; the front of Jove himself :
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command :
> A station like the herald Mercury,
> New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill "—*Hamlet.*

Illiterate is an ambiguous term : the question is, whether poetick history could be only known by an adept in *languages.* It is no reflection on this ingenious gentleman, when I say, that I use on this occasion the words of a *better* critick, who yet was not willing to carry the *illiteracy* of our poet *too far :* — " They who are in such astonishment at the *learning* of Shakspeare, forget that the pagan imagery was familiar to all the poets of his time; and that abundance of this sort of learning was to be picked up from almost every English book, that he could take into his hands." For not to insist upon Stephen Bateman's " Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes," 1577, and several other laborious compilations on the subject, all this and much more mythology might as perfectly have been learned from the " Testament of Creseide," and the " Fairy Queen," as from a regular Pantheon or Polymetis himself.

Mr. Upton, not contented with *heathen* learning, when he finds it in the text, must necessarily super-add it, when it appears to be wanting : because Shakspeare most certainly hath lost it by accident.

In Much Ado about Nothing, Don Pedro says of the insensible Benedict, " He hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bow-string, and the little *hangman* dare not shoot at him."

This mythology is not recollected in the ancients, and therefore the critick hath no doubt but his author wrote — "*Henchman,* — a *page, pusio :* and *this* word seeming too hard for the printer, he translated the little urchin into a *hangman,* a character no way belonging to him."

But this character was not borrowed from the ancients; — it came from the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney: —

> "Millions of yeares this old drivell Cupid lives;
> While still more wretch, more wicked he doth prove;
> Till now at length that Jove an office gives,
> (At Juno's suite who much did Argus love)
> In this our world a *hangman* for to be
> Of all those fooles that will have all they see."
> B. II. c. 14.

I know it may be objected on the authority of such biographers as Theophilus Cibber, and the writer of the Life of Sir Philip, prefixed to the modern editions; that the Arcadia was not published before 1613, and consequently too late for this imitation · but I have a copy in my own possession printed for W. Ponsonbie, 1590, 4to. which hath escaped the notice of industrious Ames, and the rest of our typographical antiquaries.

Thus likewise every word of antiquity is to be cut down to the classical standard.

In a note on the Prologue to Troilus and Cressida, (which by the way is not met with in the *quarto*,) Mr. Theobald informs us, that the very *names* of the gates of Troy, have been barbarously demolished by the editors: and a deal of learned dust he makes in setting them right again; much however to Mr. Heath's satisfaction. Indeed the learning is modestly withdrawn from the later editions, and we are quietly instructed to read,

> "Dardan, and Thymbria, Ilia, Scæa, Troian,
> And Antenorides."

But had he looked into the *Troy boke* of Lydgate, instead of puzzling himself with Dares Phrygius, he would have found the horrid demolition to have been neither the work of Shakspeare nor his editors: —

> "Thereto his cyte | compassed enuyrowne
> Hadde gates VI to entre into the towne:
> The first of all | and strengest eke with all,
> Largest also | and moste pryncypall,
> Of mighty byldyng | alone pereless,
> Was by the kynge called | Dardanydes;
> And in storye | like as it is founde,
> Tymbria | was named the seconde;
> And the thyrde | called Helyas,
> The fourthe gate | hyghte also Cetheas;
> She fifthe Trojana | the syxth Anthonydes,
> Stronge and mighty | both in werre and pes."
> Lond. empr. by R. Pynson, 1513, fol. B. II. ch. xi.

Our excellent friend Mr. Hurd hath borne a noble testimony on our side of the question. "Shakspeare," says this true critick, "owed the felicity of freedom from the bondage of

classical superstition, to the *want* of what is called the *advantage* of a learned education. — This, as well as a vast superiority of genius, hath contributed to lift this astonishing man to the glory of being esteemed the most original *thinker* and *speaker*, since the times of Homer." And hence indisputably the amazing variety of style and manner, unknown to all other writers: an argument of *itself* sufficient to emancipate Shakspeare from the supposition of a *classical training*. Yet to be honest, *one* imitation is *fastened* on our poet; which hath been insisted upon likewise by Mr. Upton and Mr. Whalley. You remember it in the famous speech of Claudio in Measure for Measure.

" Ay, but to die and go we know not where!" &c.

Most certainly the idea of " a spirit bathing in fiery floods," of residing " in thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice," or of being " imprisoned in the viewless winds," are not *original* in our author; but I am not sure that they came from the *Platonick-hell* of Virgil. The monks also had their hot and their cold hell: " The fyrste is fyre that ever brenneth, and never gyveth lighte," says an old homily; — " the seconde is passing colde, that yf a grete hylle of fyre were casten therin, it sholde torn to yce." One of their legends, well remembered in the time of Shakspeare, gives us a dialogue between a bishop and a soul tormented in a piece of ice, which was brought to cure *a grete brenning heate* in his foote take care you do not interpret this the *gout*, for I remember Mr. Menage quotes a *canon* upon us —

Si quis dixerit episcopum *podagra* laborare, anathema sit.

Another tells us of the soul of a monk fastened to a rock, which the winds were to blow about for a twelvemonth, and purge of its enormities. Indeed this doctrine was before now introduced into poetick fiction, as you may see in a poem " where the lover declareth his pains to exceed far the pains of hell," among the many miscellaneous ones subjoined to the works of Surrey. Nay, a very learned and inquisitive Brother-Antiquary, our Greek Professor, hath observed to me on the authority of Blefkenius, that this was the ancient opinion of the inhabitants of Iceland; who were certainly very little read either in the *poet* or the *philosopher*.

After all, Shakspeare's curiosity might lead him to *translations*. Gawin Douglas really changes the *Platonick-hell* into the " punytion of saulis in purgatory." and it is observable, that when the Ghost informs Hamlet of his doom there,

" Till the foul crimes done in his days of nature
Are *burnt and purg'd away*.——"

the expression is very similar to the bishop's. I will give you his version as concisely as I can: "It is a nedeful thyng to suffer panis and torment — sum in the wyndis, sum under the watter, and in the fire uthir sum: thus the mony vices —

'Contrakkit in the corpis be *done away*
And purgit——"—Sixte Booke of Eneados, fol. p. 191.

It seems, however, "that Shakspeare *himself* in The Tempest hath translated some expressions of Virgil: witness the *O dea certe*." I presume, we are here directed to the passage, where Ferdinand says of Miranda after hearing the songs of Ariel,

"—— Most sure, the goddess
On whom these airs attend."

and so *very small* Latin is sufficient for this formidable translation, that if it be thought any honour to our poet, I am loath to deprive him of it; but his honour is not built on such a sandy foundation. Let us turn to a *real translator*, and examine whether the idea might not be fully comprehended by an English reader; *supposing* it necessarily borrowed from Virgil. Hexameters in our own language are almost forgotten; we will quote therefore this time from Stanyhurst:

"O to thee, fayre virgin, what terme may rightly be fitted?
Thy tongue, thy visage no mortal frayltie resembleth.
—— *No doubt, a godesse!*"— Edit. 1583

Gabriel Harvey desired only to be "*epitaph'd*, the inventor of the English *hexameter*," and for a while every one would be *halting on Roman feet*; but the ridicule of our fellow-collegian Hall, in one of his Satires, and the reasoning of Daniel, in his Defence of Rhyme against Campion, presently reduced us to our original Gothick.

But to come nearer the purpose, what will you say, if I can show you, that Shakspeare, when, in the favourite phrase, he had a Latin poet *in his eye*, most assuredly made use of a translation?

Prospero, in the Tempest, begins the address to his attendant *spirits*,

"Ye elves of hills, of standing lakes, and groves."

This speech Dr. Warburton rightly observes to be borrowed from Medea in Ovid: and "it proves," says Mr. Holt, "beyond contradiction, that Shakspeare was perfectly acquainted with the sentiments of the ancients on the subject of inchantments." The original lines are these: —

Auræque, et venti, montesque, amnesque, lacusque,
Diique omnes nemorum, diique omnes noctis adeste.

It happens, however, that the translation by Arthur Golding is by no means literal, and Shakspeare hath closely followed it: —

"Ye ayres and winds; *ye elves of hills*, of brookes, of woods alone,
Of standing lakes, and of the night approche ye everych one."

I think it is unnecessary to pursue this any further; especially as more powerful arguments await us.

In the Merchant of Venice, the Jew, as an apology for his cruelty to Antonio, rehearses many *sympathies* and *antipathies* for which *no reason can be rendered*: —

"Some love not a gaping pig ——
And others when the *bagpipe* sings i' th' nose,
Cannot contain their urine for *affection*."

This incident, Dr. Warburton supposes to be taken from a passage in Scaliger's Exercitations against Cardan: "Narrabo tibi jocosam sympathiam *Reguli Vasconis* equitis: is dum viveret audito *phormingis* sono, urinam illico facere cogebatur." — "And," proceeds the Doctor, "to make this jocular story still more ridiculous, Shakspeare, I suppose, translated *phorminx* by *bagpipes*.

Here we seem fairly caught; — for Scaliger's work was never, as the term goes, *done into English*. But luckily in an old translation from the French of Peter le Loire, entitled, "A Treatise of Specters, or straunge Sights, Visions, and Apparitions, appearing sensibly unto Men," we have this identical story from Scaliger: and what is still more, a marginal note gives us in all probability the very fact alluded to, as well as the word of Shakspeare: "Another gentleman of this quality liued of late in Deuon neere Excester, who could not endure the playing on a *bagpipe*."

We may just add, as some observation hath been made upon it, that *affection* in the sense of *sympathy* was formerly *technical*; and so used by Lord Bacon, Sir Kenelm Digby, and many other writers.

A single word in Queen Catherine's character of Wolsey, in Henry VIII is brought by the Doctor as another argument or the learning of Shakspeare: —

- He was a man
Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking
Himself with princes; one that by *suggestion*
Ty'd all the kingdom. Simony was fair play.
His own opinion was his law: i' th' presence
He would say untruths, and be ever double
Both in his words and meaning. He was never,
But where he meant to ruin, pitiful.
His promises were, as he then was, mighty;
But his performance, as he now is, nothing.
Of his own body he was ill, and gave
The clergy ill example."

"The word *suggestion*," says the critick, "is here used with great propriety, and *seeming* knowledge of the Latin tongue:" and he proceeds to settle the sense of it from *the late Roman writers and their glossers*. But Shakspeare's knowledge was from Holinshed, whom he follows *verbatim*.

"This cardinal was of a great stomach, for he compted himself equal with princes, and by craftie *suggestion* got into his hands innumerable treasure: he forced little on simonie, and was not pitifull, and stood affectionate in his own opinion: in open presence he would lie and seie untruth, and was double both in speech and meaning: he would promise much and performe little: he was vicious of his bodie, and gaue the clergie euill example." Edit. 1587, p 922.

Perhaps after this quotation, you may not think, that Sir Thomas Hanmer, who reads *Tyth'd*, instead of *Ty'd all the kingdom*, deserves quite so much of Dr. Warburton's severity. —Indisputably the passage, like every other in the speech, is intended to express the meaning of the parallel one in the chronicle: it cannot therefore be credited, that any man, when the *original* was produced, should still choose to defend a *cant* acceptation; and inform us, perhaps, *seriously*, that in *gaming* language, from I know not what practice, to *tye* is to *equal!* A sense of the word, as far as I have yet found, *unknown* to our old writers: and, if *known*, would not surely have been used in this place by our author.

But let us turn from conjecture to Shakspeare's authorities. Hall, from whom the above description is copied by Holinshed, is very explicit in the demands of the Cardinal; who having insolently told the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, "For sothe I thinke, that *halfe* your substaunce were to litle," assures them by way of comfort at the end of his harangue, that *upon an average* the *tythe* should be sufficient; "Sers, speake not to breake that thyng that is concluded, for *some* shall not paie the *tenth* parte, and *some* more."—And again: "Thei saied, the Cardinall by visitacions, makyng of abbottes, probates of testamentes, grauntıng of faculties, licences, and other pollynges in his courtes legantines, had made his *threasure egall with the kinges*." Edit. 1248, p. 138, and 143.

Skelton, in his Why come ye not to Court, gives us, after his rambling manner, a curious character of Wolsey:—

- By and by
He will drynke us so dry
And sucke us so nye
That men shall scantly
Haue penny or halpennye
God saue hys noble grace
And graunt him a place

Endlesse to dwel
With the deuill of hel
For and he were there
We nead neuer feare
Of the feendes blacke
For I undertake
He wold so brag and crake
That he wold than make
The deuils to quake
To shudder and to shake
Lyke a fier drake
And with a cole rake
Bruse them on a brake
And binde them to a stake
And set hel on fyre
At his owne desire
He is such a grym syre!"—Edit. 1568.

Mr. Upton and some other criticks have thought it very *scholar-like* in Hamlet to swear the Centinels on a *sword*. but this is for ever met with. For instance, in the *Passus Primus* of Pierce Plowman: —

> "Dauid in his daies dubbed knightes,
> And did hem *swere on her sword* to serue truth euer."

And in *Hieronymo*, the common butt of our author and the wits of the time, says Lorenzo to Pedringano,

> "Swear on this cross, that what thou sayst is true—
> But if I prove thee perjured and unjust,
> This very *sword*, whereon thou took'st thine oath,
> Shall be the worker of thy tragedy!"

We have therefore no occasion to go with Mr. Garrick as far as the French of Brantôme to illustrate this ceremony: a *gentleman*, who will be always allowed the *first commentator* on Shakspeare, when he does not carry us beyond *himself*.

Mr Upton, however, in the next place, produces a passage from Henry VI. whence he argues it to be very plain, that our author had not only *read Cicero's Offices*, but even more *critically* than many of the editors: —

> "———— This villain here,
> Being captain of a *pinnace*, threatens more
> Than Bargulus, the strong Illyrian pirate."

So the *wight*, he observes with great exultation, is named by Cicero in the editions of Shakspeare's time, "Bargulus Illyrius latro:" though the modern editors have chosen to call him Bardylis: — "and *thus* I found it in *two* MSS."——And *thus* he might have found it in *two* translations, before Shakspeare was born. Robert Whytinton, 1533, calls him, "Bargulus a

pirate upon the see of Illiry;" and Nicholas Grimald, about twenty years afterward, "Bargulus the Illyrian robber."

But it had been easy to have checked Mr. Upton's exultation, by observing, that Bargulus does not appear in the *quarto.*—Which also is the case with some fragments of Latin verses, in the different *parts* of this *doubtful* performance.

It is scarcely worth mentioning, that two or three more Latin passages, which are met with in our author, are immediately transcribed from the story or chronicle before him. Thus, in Henry V. whose right to the kingdom of France is copiously demonstrated by the Archbishop:—

> " ———— There is no bar
> To make against your highness' claim to France,
> But this which they produce from Pharamond:
> In terram Salicam mulieres nè succedant:
> No woman shall succeed in Salike land:
> Which Salike land the French unjustly gloze
> To be the realm of France, and Pharamond
> The founder of this law and female bar
> Yet their own authors faithfully affirm,
> That the land Salike lies in Germany.
> Between the floods of Sala and of Elve," &c.

Archbishop Chichelie, says Holinshed, "did much inueie against the surmised and false fained law Salike, which the Frenchmen alledge euer against the kings of England in barre of their just title to the crowne of France. The very words of that supposed law are these, In terram Salicam mulieres nè succedant, that is to saie, Into the Salike land let not women succeed; which the French glossers expound to be the realm of France, and that this law was made by King Pharamond; whereas, yet their owne authors affirme, that the land Salike is in Germanie, between the rivers of Elbe and Sala, &c." p. 545.

It hath lately been repeated from Mr. Guthrie's "Essay on English Tragedy," that the *portrait* of Macbeth's *wife* is copied from Buchanan, "whose spirit, as well as words, is translated into the play of Shakspeare; and it had signified nothing to have pored only on Holinshed for *facts.*"—"Animus etiam, per se ferox, prope quotidianis conviciis uxoris (quæ omnium consiliorum ei erat conscia) stimulabatur "—This is the whole, that Buchanan says of the *lady;* and truly I see no more *spirit* in the Scotch than in the English chronicler. "The wordes of the three weird sisters also greatly encouraged him, [to the murder of Duncan] but specially his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was very ambitious, brenning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene." Edit. 1577, p. 244.

This part of Holinshed is an abridgement of Johne Bellenden's translation of the *noble clerk*, Hector Boece, imprinted at Edinburgh, in fol. 1541. I will give the passage as it is found there: "His wyfe impacient of lang tary (*as all wemen ar*) specially quhare they ar desirus of ony purpos, gaif hym gret artation to pursew the thrid weird, that sche micht be ane quene, calland hym oft tymis febyl cowart and nocht desyrus of honouris, sen he durst not assailze the thing with manheid and curage, quhilk is offerit to hym be beniuolence of fortoun. Howbeit sindry otheris hes assailzeit sic thinges afore with maist terribyl jeopardyis, quhen they had not sic sickernes to succeid in the end of thair labouris as he had had." P. 173.

But we can *demonstrate*, that Shakspeare had not the story from Buchanan. According to *him*, the weird-sisters salute Macbeth, "Una Angusiæ Thamum, altera Moraviæ, tertia *regem*"— Thane of Angus, and of Murray, &c. but according to Holinshed, immediately from Bellenden, as it stands in Shakspeare: "The first of them spake and saide, All hayle Makbeth, thane of Glammis; the second of them said, Hayle Makbeth, thane of Cawder; but the third said, All hayle Makbeth, that hereafter shall be *king of Scotland*." P. 243.

"1. *Witch* All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Glamis!
2 *Witch* All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!
3 *Witch* All hail, Macbeth! that shall be *king* hereafter!"

Here too our poet found the equivocal predictions, on which his hero so fatally depended. "He had learned of certain wysards, how that he ought to take heede of Macduffe;— and surely hereupon had he put Macduffe to death, but a certaine witch whom he had in great trust, had tolde, that he should neuer be slain with *man born of any woman*, nor vanquished till the wood of Bernane came to the castell of Dunsinane." P. 244. And the scene between Malcom and Macduff in the fourth Act is almost literally taken from the Chronicle.

Macbeth was certainly one of Shakspeare's latest productions, and it might possibly have been suggested to him by a little performance on the same subject at Oxford, before King James, 1605. I will transcribe my notice of it from Wake's Rex Platonicus: "Fabulæ ansam dedit antiqua de Regiâ prosapiâ historiola apud Scoto-Britannos celebrata, quæ narrat tres olim Sibyllas occurrisse duobus Scotiæ proceribus, Macbetho et Banchoni, et illum prædixisse Regem futurum, sed Regem nullum geniturum; hunc Regem non futurum, sed Reges geniturum multos. Vaticinii veritatem rerum eventus com-

probavit. Banchonis enim è stirpe potentissimus Jacobus oriundus." P. 29.

A stronger argument hath been brought from the plot of Hamlet. Dr. Grey and Mr. Whalley assure us, that for *this*, Shakspeare *must* have read Saxo Grammaticus in Latin, for no translation hath been made into any modern language. But the truth is, he did not take it from Saxo at all; a novel called The Hystorie of Hamblet, was his original: a fragment of which, in *black letter*, I have been favoured with by a very curious and intelligent gentleman, [Mr. Capell] to whom the lovers of Shakspeare will some time or other owe great obligations.

It hath indeed been said, that "IF *such an history exists*, it is almost impossible that any poet unacquainted with the Latin language (supposing his perceptive faculties to have been ever so acute,) could have caught the characteristical madness of Hamlet, described by Saxo Grammaticus, so happily as it is delineated by Shakspeare.

Very luckily, our fragment gives us a part of Hamlet's speech to his *mother*, which sufficiently replies to this observation: — "It was not without cause, and juste occasion, that my gestures, countenances and words seeme to proceed from a madman, and that I desire to haue all men esteeme mee wholy depriued of sence and reasonable understanding, bycause I am well assured, that he that hath made no conscience to kill his owne brother, (accustomed to murthers, and allured with desire of gouernement without controll in his treasons,) will not spare to saue himselfe with the like crueltie, in the blood, and flesh of the loyns of his brother, by him massacred: and therefore it is better for me to fayne madnesse then to use my right senses as nature hath bestowed them upon me. The bright shining clearnes therof I am forced to hide vnder this shadow of dissimulation, as the sun doth his beams vnder some great cloud, when the wether in summer time ouercasteth: the face of a mad man, serueth to couer my gallant countenance, and the gestures of a fool are fit for me, to the end that guiding my self wisely therin I may preserue my life for the Danes and the memory of my late deceased father, for that the desire of reuenging his death is so ingrauen in my heart, that if I dye not shortly, I hope to take such and so great vengeance, that these countryes shall for euer speake thereof. Neuerthelesse I must stay the time, meanes, and occasion, lest by making ouer great hast, I be now the cause of mine own sodaine ruine and ouerthrow, and by that meanes, end, before I beginne to effect my heart's desire: hee that hath to doe with a wicked, disloyall, cruell, and discourteous man, must vse craft, and

politike inuentions, such as fine witte can best imagine, not to discouer his interprise: for seeing that by force I cannot affect my desire, reason alloweth me by dissimulation, subtiltie, and secret practises to proceed therein."

But to put the matter out of all question, my communicative friend above-mentioned, Mr. Capell, (for why should I not give myself the credit of his name?) hath been fortunate enough to procure from the collection of the Duke of New-castle, a *complete* copy of the Historie of Hamblet, which proves to be a translation from the French of Belleforest; and he tells me, that "all the chief incidents of the play, and all the capital characters are there in *embryo*, after a rude and barbarous manner: sentiments, indeed, there are none, that Shakspeare could borrow; nor any expression but *one*, which is, where Hamlet kills Polonius behind the arras; in doing which he is made to cry out, as in the play, "*a rat, a rat!*"— So much for Saxo Grammaticus!

It is scarcely conceivable, how industriously the puritanical zeal of the last age exerted itself in destroying, amongst better things, the innocent amusements of the former. Numberless *Tales* and *Poems* are alluded to in old books, which are now, perhaps, no where to be found. Mr. Capell informs me (and he is in these matters, the most able of all men to give information,) that our author appears to have been beholden to some novels, which he hath yet only seen in French or Italian; but he adds, "to say they are not in some English dress, prosaic or metrical, and perhaps with circumstances nearer to his stories, is what I will not take upon me to do; nor indeed is what I believe; but rather the contrary, and that time and accident will bring some of them to light, if not all."

W. Painter, at the conclusion of the second *Tome* of his Palace of Pleasure, 1567, *advertises* the reader, "bicause sodaynly (contrary to expectation) this volume is risen to a greater heape of leaues, I doe omit for this present time *sundry nouels* of mery deuise, reseruing the same to be joyned with the rest of an other part, wherein shall succeede the remnant of Bandello, specially sutch (suffrable) as the learned French man François de Belleforest hath selected, and the choysest done in the Italian. Some also out of Erizzo, Ser Giouanni Florentino, Parabosco, Cynthio, Straparole, Sansouino, and the best liked out of the Queene of Nauarre, and other authors. Take these in good part, with those that haue and shall come forth."— But I am not able to find that a *third tome* was ever published; and it is very probable, that the interest of his booksellers, and more especially the prevailing mode of the time, might lead him afterward to print his *sundry novels* sepa-

rately. If this were the case, it is no wonder, that such *fugitive pieces* are recovered with difficulty; when the *two tomes*, which Tom Rawlinson would have called *justa volumina*, are almost annihilated. Mr. Ames, who searched after books of this sort with the utmost avidity, most certainly had not seen them, when he published his Typographical Antiquities; as appears from his blunders about them; and possibly I myself might have remained in the same predicament, had I not been favoured with a copy by my generous friend, Mr. Lort.

Mr. Colman, in the Preface to his elegant Translation of Terence, hath offered some arguments for the learning of Shakspeare, which have been retailed with much confidence, since the appearance of Mr. Johnson's edition.

"Besides the resemblance of particular passages scattered up and down in different plays, it is well known, that the Comedy of Errors is in a great measure founded on the Menæchmi of Plautus; but I do not recollect ever to have seen it observed, that the disguise of the Pedant in The Taming of the Shrew, and his assuming the name and character of Vincentio, seem to be evidently taken from the disguise of the Sycophanta, in the Trinummus of the said author; and there is a quotation from the Eunuch of Terence also, so familiarly introduced into the dialogue of The Taming of the Shrew, that I think it puts the question of Shakspeare's having read the Roman comick poets in the *original* language out of all doubt,

Redime te captum, quam queas, minimo.

With respect to *resemblances*, I shall not trouble you any further. That the Comedy of Errors is founded on the Menæchmi, it is notorious; nor is it less so, that a translation of it by W. W. perhaps William Warner, the author of Albion's England, was extant in the time of Shakspeare; though Mr. Upton, and some other advocates for his learning, have cautiously dropped the mention of it. Besides this, (if indeed it were different.) in the Gesta Grayorum, the Christmas Revels of the Grays-Inn Gentlemen, 1594, "a *Comedy of Errors* like to Plautus his *Menechmus* was played by the Players." And the same hath been suspected to be the subject of the "goodlie Comedie of Plautus," acted at Greenwich before the King and Queen in 1520; as we learn from Hall and Holinshed: — Riccoboni highly compliments the English on opening their stage so well: but unfortunately, Cavendish, in his Life of Wolsey, calls it an "excellent Interlude in Latine" About the same time it was exhibited in German at Nuremburgh, by the celebrated Hanssach, the *shoemaker*.

"But a character in the Taming of the Shrew, is bor-

rowed from the Trinummus, and no translation of *that* was extant."

Mr. Colman indeed hath been better employed; but if he had met with an old comedy, called Supposes, translated from Ariosto by George Gascoigne, he certainly would not have appealed to Plautus. Thence Shakspeare borrowed this part of the plot, (as well as some of the phraseology,) though Theobald pronounces it his own invention; there likewise he found the quaint name of Petruchio. My young master and his man exchange habits and characters, and persuade a Scenæse, as he is called, to personate the *father*, exactly as in the Taming of the Shrew, by the pretended danger of his coming from Sienna to Ferrara, contrary to the order of the government.

Still, Shakspeare quotes a line from the Eunuch of Terence; by memory too, and what is more, "purposely alters it, in order to bring the sense within the compass of one line."—— This remark was previous to Mr. Johnson's; or indisputably it would not have been made at all.—"Our author had this line from Lilly; which I mention that it may not be brought as an argument of his learning."

"But how," cries an unprovoked antagonist, "can you take upon you to say, that he had it from Lilly, and not from Terence?" I will answer for Mr. Johnson, who is above answering for himself. Because it is quoted as it appears in the *grammarian*, and not as it appears in the *poet*. And thus we have done with the *purposed* alteration. Udall likewise in his "Floures for Latin speaking, gathered out of Terence," 1560, reduces the passage to a single line, and subjoins a translation.

We have hitherto supposed Shakspeare the author of The Taming of a Shrew, but his property in it is extremely disputable. I will give you my opinion, and the reasons on which it is founded. I suppose then the present play not *originally* the work of Shakspeare, but restored by him to the stage, with the whole induction of the Tinker, and some other occasional improvements; especially in the character of Petruchio. It is very obvious, that the *induction* and the *play* were either the works of different hands, or written at a great interval of time; the former is in our author's *best* manner, and the greater part of the *latter* in his *worst*, or even below it. Dr. Warburton declares it to be *certainly* spurious; and without doubt, *supposing* it to have been written by Shakspeare, it must have been one of his *earliest* productions; yet it is not mentioned in the list of his works by Meres in 1598.

I have met with a facetious piece of Sir John Harrington,

printed in 1596, (and possibly there may be an earlier edition,) called The Metamorphosis of Ajax, where I suspect an allusion to the old play: "Reade the *booke* of Taming a Shrew, which hath made a number of us so perfect, that *now* every one can rule a shrew in our countrey, save he that hath hir." I am aware, a *modern* linguist may object, that the word *book* does not at present seem *dramatick*, but it was once almost *technically* so: Gosson, in his Schoole of Abuse, "contayning a pleasaunt inuective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters, and such-like Caterpillars of a common-wealth," 1579, mentions "twoo prose *bookes* plaied at the Belsauage;" and Hearne tells us in a note at the end of William of Worcester, that he had seen "a MS. in the nature of a *play* or *interlude*, intitled, The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore."

And in fact, there is such an old *anonymous* play in Mr. Pope's list. "A pleasant conceited History, called, the Taming of a Shrew—sundry times acted by the Earl of Pembroke his Servants." Which seems to have been republished by the remains of that company in 1607, when Shakspeare's copy appeared at the Black-Friars or the Globe.—Nor let this seem derogatory from the character of our poet. There is no reason to believe, that he wanted to claim the play as his own; it was not even printed till some years after his death; but he merely revived it on his stage as a *manager*.—Ravenscroft assures us, that this was really the case with Titus Andronicus; which, it may be observed, hath not Shakspeare's name on the title-page of the only edition published in his lifetime. Indeed, from every internal mark, I have not the least doubt but this *horrible* piece was originally written by the author of the *lines* thrown into the mouth of the *player* in Hamlet, and of the tragedy of Locrine: which likewise from some assistance perhaps given to his friend, hath been unjustly and ignorantly charged upon Shakspeare.

But the *sheet-anchor* holds fast: Shakspeare himself hath left some translations from Ovid. "The Epistles," says one, "of Paris and Helen, give a sufficient proof of his acquaintance with *that* poet:" "And it may be concluded," says another, "that he was a competent judge of *other* authors, who wrote in the same language."

This hath been the universal cry, from Mr. Pope himself to the criticks of yesterday. Possibly, however, the gentlemen will hesitate a moment, if we tell them, that Shakspeare was *not* the author of these translations. Let them turn to a forgotten book, by Thomas Heywood, called, Britaines Troy, printed by W. Jaggard in 1609, fol. and they will find these identical Epistles, "which being so pertinent to our historie,"

says Heywood, "*I* thought necessarie to translate."—How then came they ascribed to Shakspeare? We will tell them that likewise. The same voluminous writer published an Apology for Actors, 4to. 1612, and in an Appendix directed to his new printer, Nic. Okes, he accuses his old one, Jaggard, of "taking the two Epistles of Paris to Helen and Helen to Paris, and printing them in a less volume, and under the name of *another*:—but *he* was much offended with Master Jaggard, that altogether unknowne to him, he had presumed to make so bold with his name" In the same work of Heywood are all the other translations, which have been printed in the modern editions of the poems of Shakspeare.

You now hope for land. We have seen through little matters, but what must be done with a whole book?—In 1751, was reprinted, "A compendious or briefe Examination of certayne ordinary Complaints of Diuers of our Countrymen in these our Days: which although they are in some Parte unjust and friuolous, yet are they all by way of Dialogue, throughly debated and discussed by William Shakspeare, Gentleman," 8vo.

This extraordinary piece was originally published in 4to. 1581, and dedicated by the author, "To the most vertuous and learned lady, his most deare and soveraigne princesse, Elizabeth; being inforced by her Majesties late and singular clemency in pardoning certayne his unduetifull misdemeanour." And by the modern editors, to the late king; as "a treatise composed by the most extensive and fertile genius, that ever any age or nation produced."

Here we join issue with the writers of that excellent though very unequal work, the Biographia Britannica: "If" say they, "this piece could be written by our poet, it would be absolutely decisive in the dispute about his learning; for many quotations appear in it from the Greek and Latin classicks."

The concurring circumstances of the *name*, and the *misdemeanor* which is supposed to be the old story of *deer stealing*, seem fairly to challenge our poet for the author: but they hesitate.—His claim may appear to be confuted by the date 1581, when Shakspeare was only *seventeen*, and the *long* experience, which the writer talks of.—But I will not keep you in suspense: the book was *not* written by Shakspeare.

Strype, in his Annals, calls the author *some learned man*, and this gave me the first suspicion. I knew very well, that honest John (to use the language of Sir Thomas Bodley) did not waste his time with such *baggage books* as *plays* and *poems*; yet I must suppose, that he had heard of the name of Shakspeare.

After a while I met with the original edition. Here in the title-page, and at the end of the dedication, appear only the initials, W. S. Gent. and presently I was informed by Anthony Wood, that the book in question was written, not by William Shakspeare, but by William Stafford, Gentleman: which at once accounted for the *misdemeanour* in the dedication. For Stafford had been concerned at that time, and was indeed afterward, as Camden and the other annalists inform us, with some of the conspirators against Elizabeth; which he properly calls his *unduetifull* behaviour.

I hope by this time, that any one open to conviction may be nearly satisfied; and I will promise to give you on this head very little more trouble.

The justly celebrated Mr. Warton hath favoured us, in his Life of Dr. Bathurst, with some *hearsay* particulars concerning Shakspeare from the papers of Aubrey, which had been in the hands of Wood; and I ought not to suppress them, as the *last* seems to make against my doctrine. They came originally, I find, on consulting the MS., from one Mr. Beeston: and I am sure Mr. Warton, whom I have the honour to call my friend, and an associate in the question, will be in no pain about their credit.

"William Shakspeare's father was a butcher, — while he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he killed a calf, he would do it in a high style, and make a speech. This William being inclined *naturally* to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess, about *eighteen*, and was an actor in one of the playhouses, and did act *exceedingly well*. He began *early* to make essays in dramatique poetry. — The humour of the Constable in the Midsummer-Night's Dream he happened to take at Crendon in Bucks. — I think, I have been told, that he left near three hundred pounds to a *sister*. — He understood Latin pretty well, *for* he had been in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the country."

I will be short in my animadversions; and take them in their order.

The account of the *trade* of the family is not only contrary to all other tradition, but, as it may seem, to the instrument from the Herald's Office, so frequently reprinted. — Shakspeare most certainly went to London, and commenced actor through necessity, not natural inclination. — Nor have we any reason to suppose, that he did act *exceeding well*. Rowe tells us, from the information of Betterton, who was inquisitive into this point, and had very early opportunities of inquiry from Sir W. D'Avenant, that he was no *extraordinary actor*; and that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet.

Yet this *chef d'œuvre* did not please: I will give you an original stroke at it. Dr. Lodge, who was for ever pestering the town with pamphlets, published in the year 1596. "Wits Miserie, and the Worlds Madnesse, discovering the Devils incarnat of this Age," 4to. One of these devils are "Hate-virtue, or Sorrow for another man's good successe," who, says the Doctor, is "*a foule lubber*, and looks as pale as the vizard of the Ghost, which cried so miserably at the theatre, like an oister-wife, *Hamlet revenge*." Thus you see Mr. Holt's supposed *proof*, in the Appendix to the late edition, that Hamlet was written after 1597, or perhaps 1602, will by no means hold good, whatever might be the case of the particular passage on which it is founded.

Nor does it appear, that Shakspeare did begin early to make essays in dramatick poetry: The Arraignment of Paris, 1584, which hath so often been ascribed to him on the credit of Kirkman and Winstanley, was written by George Peele; and Shakspeare is not met with, even as an assistant, till at least seven years afterward. — Nash, in his Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities, prefixed to Greene's Arcadia, 4to. black letter, recommends his friend, Peele, "as the chiefe supporter of pleasance now living, the Atlas of Poetrie, and primus verborum artifex: whose first increase, The Arraignment of Paris, might plead to their opinions his pregnant dexteritie of wit, and manifold varietie of inuention."

In the next place, unfortunately, there is neither such a character as a Constable in the Midsummer-Night's Dream: nor was the three hundred pounds legacy to a sister, but a daughter.

And to close the whole, it is not possible, according to Aubrey himself, that Shakspeare could have been some years a schoolmaster in the country; on which circumstance only the supposition of his learning is professedly founded. He was not surely very young, when he was employed to kill calves, and commenced player about eighteen! — The truth is, that he left his father, for a wife, a year sooner; and had at least two children born at Stratford before he retired from thence to London. It is therefore sufficiently clear, that poor Anthony had too much reason for his character of Aubrey. You will find it in his own account of his life, published by Hearne, which I would earnestly recommend to any hypochondriack:— "A pretender to antiquities, roving, magotic-headed, and sometimes little better than crased: and being exceedingly credulous, would stuff his many letters sent to A. W. with *folliries* and misinformations." P. 577.

Thus much for the learning of Shakspeare with respect to

the ancient languages: indulge me with an observation or two on the supposed knowledge of the modern ones, and I will promise to release you.

"It is evident," we have been told, "that he was not unacquainted with the Italian:" but let us inquire into the evidence.

Certainly some Italian words and phrases appear in the works of Shakspeare; yet if we had nothing else to observe, their orthography might lead us to suspect them to be not of the writer's importation. But we can go further, and prove this.

When Pistol "cheers up himself with ends of verse," he is only a copy of Hanniball Gonsaga, who ranted on yielding himself a prisoner to an English captain in the Low Countries, as you may read in an old collection of tales, called Wits, Fits, and Fancies,

> Si fortuna me tormenta,
> Il speranza me contenta.

And Sir Richard Hawkins, in his voyage to the South-Sea, 1593, throws out the same jingling distich on the loss of his pinnace.

"Master Page, sit; good Master Page, sit; *Proface.* What you want in meat, we'll have in drink," says Justice Shallow's fac totum, Davy, in the Second Part of Henry IV.

Proface, Sir Thomas Hanmer observes to be Italian, from *profaccia,* 'much good may it do you.' Mr. Johnson rather thinks it a mistake for *perforce.* Sir Thomas however is right; yet it is no argument for his author's Italian knowledge.

Old Heywood, the epigrammatist, addressed his readers long before,

> "Readers, reade this thus: for preface, *proface,*
> Much good do it you, the poore repast here," &c.
> *Woorkes,* Lond. 4to. 1562.

And Dekker in his play, If it be not good, the Diuel is in it, (which is certainly true, for it is full of devils,) makes Shackle-Soule, in the character of Friar Rush, tempt his brethren with "choice of dishes,"

> "To which *proface;* with blythe lookes sit yee."

Nor hath it escaped the quibbling manner of the Water poet, in the title of a poem prefixed to his Praise of Hempseed: "A Preamble, Preatrot, Preagallop, Preapace, or Preface; and *Proface,* my Masters, if your Stomacks serve."

But the editors are not contented without coining Italian. "Rivo, says the drunkard," is an expression of the *madcap* Prince of Wales; which Sir Thomas Hanmer corrects to *Ribi*

drink away or *again*, as it should be rather translated. Dr. Warburton accedes to this; and Mr. Johnson hath admitted it into his text; but with an observation, that *Rivo* might possibly be the cant of English taverns. And so indeed it was: it occurs frequently in Marston. Take a quotation from this comedy of What you will, 1607:

> "Musicke, tobacco, sacke, and sleepe,
> The tide of sorrow backward keep:
> If thou art sad at others fate,
> *Rivo*, drink deep, give care the mate."

In Love's Labour's Lost, Boyet calls Don Armado,

> "——A Spaniard that keeps here in court,
> A phantasme, a *monarcho*."

Here too Sir Thomas is willing to palm Italian upon us. We should read, it seems, *mammuccio*, a mammet, or puppet: Ital. *Mammuccia*. But the allusion is to a fantastical *character* of the time. — "Popular applause," says Meres, "dooth nourish some, neither do they gape after any other thing, but vaine praise and glorie, — as in our age Peter Shakerlye of Paules, and *Monarcho* that liued about the court." P. 178.

I fancy, you will be satisfied with one more instance.

"*Baccare*, You are marvellous forward," quoth Gremio to Petruchio in the Taming of a Shrew.

"But not so *forward*," says Mr. Theobald, "as our editors are *indolent*. This is a stupid corruption of the press, that none of them have dived into. We must read *Baccalare*, as Mr. Warburton acutely observed to me, by which the Italians mean, Thou ignorant, presumptuous man." — "Properly, indeed," adds Mr. Heath, "a *graduated* scholar, but ironically and sarcastically, a *pretender* to scholarship."

This is admitted by the editors and criticks of every denomination. Yet the word is neither wrong, nor Italian: it was an old proverbial one, used frequently by John Heywood; who hath made, what he pleases to call *epigrams* upon it.

Take two of them, such as they are:

> "*Backare*, quoth Mortimer to his sow:
> Went that sow *backe* at that biddyng trowe you?"

> "*Backare*, quoth Mortimer to his sow: se
> Mortimers sow speakth as good *latin* as he."

Howell takes this from Heywood in his Old Sawes and Adages: and Philpot introduces it into the Proverbs collected by Camden.

We have but few observations concerning Shakspeare's knowledge of the Spanish tongue. Dr. Grey indeed is willing to suppose, that the plot of Romeo and Juliet may be borrowed

from a *comedy* of Lopes de Vega. But the Spaniard, who was certainly acquainted with Bandello, hath not only changed the catastrophe, but the names of the characters. Neither Romeo nor Juliet; neither Montague nor Capulet, appears in this performance: and how came they to the knowledge of Shakspeare? — Nothing is more certain, than that he chiefly followed the translation by Painter, from the French of Boisteau, and hence arise the deviations from Bandello's original Italian.* It seems, however, from a passage in Ames's Typographical Antiquities, that Painter was not the only translator of this popular story: and it is possible therefore, that Shakspeare might have other assistance.

In the Induction to The Taming of the Shrew, the Tinker attempts to talk Spanish: and *consequently* the author himself was acquainted with it.

"*Paucas pallabris*, let the world slide, *sessa.*"

But this is a burlesque on *Hieronymo;* the piece of bombast, that I have mentioned to you before:

"What new device hath they devised, trow?
Pocas pallabras," &c.——

Mr. Whalley tells us, the author of this piece hath the happiness to be at this time unknown, the remembrance of him having perished with himself: Philips and others ascribe it to one William Smith: but I take this opportunity of informing him, that it was written by Thomas Kyd; if he will accept the authority of his contemporary, Heywood.

More hath been said concerning Shakspeare's acquaintance with the French language. In the play of Henry V. we have a whole scene in it, and in other places it occurs familiarly in the dialogue.

We may observe in general, that the early editions have not half the quantity; and every sentence, or rather every word most ridiculously blundered. These, for several reasons, could not possibly be published by the author; and it is extremely probable, that the French ribaldry was at first inserted by a different hand, as the many additions most certainly were after he had left the stage. — Indeed, every friend to his memory will not easily believe, that he was acquainted with the scene between Catharine and the old gentlewoman; or surely he would not have admitted such obscenity and non-

Mr. Hawkins, in the Appendix to Mr. Johnson's edition, hath an ingenious observation to prove, that Shakspeare, supposing the French to be his, had very little knowledge of the language.

"Est-il impossible d'eschapper la force de ton *bras*?" says a Frenchman. — "*Brass*, cur?" replies Pistol.

"Almost any one knows, that the French word *bras* is pronounced *brau*; and what resemblance of sound does this bear to *brass*?"

Mr. Johnson makes a doubt, whether the pronunciation of the French language may not be changed, since Shakspeare's time, "if not," says he, it may be suspected that some other man wrote the French scenes:" but this does not appear to be the case, at least in this termination, from the rules of the grammarians, or the practice of the poets. I am certain of the former from the French Alphabeth of De la Mothe, and the Orthoepia Gallica of John Eliot; and of the latter from the rhymes of Marot, Ronsard, and Du Bartas. — Connections of this kind were very common. Shakspeare himself assisted Ben Jonson in his Sejanus, as it was originally written; and Fletcher in his Two Noble Kinsmen.

But what if the French scene were occasionally introduced into every play on this subject? and perhaps there were more than one before our poet's — In Pierce Penilesse, his Supplication to the Deuill, 4to. 1592 (which, it seems, from the Epistle to the Printer, was not in the first edition), the author, Nash, exclaims, "What a glorious thing it is to have Henry the Fifth represented on the stage leading the French King prisoner, and forcing both him and the Dolphin to swear fealty!" — And it appears from the Jests of the famous comedian, Tarlton, 4to. 1611, that he had been particularly celebrated in the part of the Clown, in Henry the Fifth; but no such character exists in the play of Shakspeare. Henry the Sixth hath ever been doubted: and a passage in the above-quoted piece of Nash may give us reason to believe, it was previous to our author. "Howe would it haue joyed braue Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyen two hundred yeare in his toomb, he should triumph again on the stage; and haue his bones now embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at seuerall times) who in the tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding." —— I have no doubt but Henry the Sixth had the same author with Edward the Third, which hath been recovered to the world in Mr. Capell's Prolusions.

It hath been observed, that the Giant of Rabelais is sometimes alluded to by Shakspeare: and in *his* time no translation was extant. — But the story was in every one's hand.

In a letter by one Laneham, or Langham, for the name is written differently, concerning the entertainment at Killingworth Castle, printed in 1575, we have a list of the vulgar

romances of the age: King Arthurz Book, Huon of Burdeaus, Friar Rous, Howleglass, and *Gargantua.*" Meres mentions him as equally hurtful to young minds with the Four Sons of Aymon, and the Seven Champions. And John Taylor had him likewise in his catalogue of *authors*, prefixed to Sir Gregory Nonsence.

But to come to a conclusion, I will give you an irrefragable argument, that Shakspeare did *not* understand *two* very common words in the French and Latin Languages.

According to the articles of agreement between the conqueror Henry and the King of France, the latter was to style the former, (in the corrected French of the former editions,) "Nostre *tres cher* filz Henry roy d'Angleterre; and in Latin, Præclarissimus filius," &c. "What," says Dr. Warburton, "is *tres cher* in French, *præclarissimus* in Latin! we should read *præcarissimus.*" — This appears to be exceedingly true; but how came the blunder? it is a typographical one in Holinshed, which Shakspeare copied; but must indisputably have corrected, had he been acquainted with the languages. — "Our said father, during his life, shall name, call, and write us in French in this manner: Nostre *tres chier* filz, Henry roy d'Engleterre — and in Latine in this manner, *Præclarissimus* filius noster." Edit. 1587, p. 574.

To corroborate this instance, let me observe to you, though it be nothing further to the purpose, that another error of the same kind hath been the source of a mistake in an historical passage of our author, which hath ridiculously troubled the criticks.

Richard the Third harangues his army before the battle of Bosworth:

> "Remember whom ye are to cope withal,
> A sort of vagabonds, of rascals, runaways—
> And who doth lead them but a paltry fellow
> Long kept in Britaine at *our mother*'s cost,
> A milksop," &c.——

"*Our* mother," Mr. Theobald perceives to be wrong, and Henry was somewhere secreted on the *continent*: he reads therefore, and all the editors after him,

> "Long kept in Bretagne at *his* mother's cost."

But give me leave to transcribe a few more lines from Holinshed, and you will find at once, that Shakspeare had been there before me: —— "Ye see further, how a companie of traitors, theeves, outlaws and runnagates be aiders and partakers of his feat and enterprise. — And to begin with the erle of Richmond captaine of this rebellion, he is a Welsh milksop — brought up by *my moother's* means and mine, like a

captive in a close cage in the court of Francis Duke of Britaine." P. 756.

Holinshed copies this *verbatim* from his brother chronicler Hall, edit. 1548, fol. 54.; but his printer hath given us by accident the word *moother* instead of *brother*; as it is in the original, and ought to be in Shakspeare.

I hope, my good friend, you have by this time acquitted our great poet of all piratical depredations on the ancients, and are ready to receive my *conclusion*. — He remembered perhaps enough of his *school-boy* learning to put the *Hig, hag, hog*, into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans; and might pick up in the writers of the time, or the course of his conversation, a familiar phrase or two of French or Italian: but his *studies* were most demonstratively confined to *nature* and *his own language*.

In the course of this disquisition, you have often smiled at "all such reading, as was never read;" and possibly I may have indulged it too far: but it is the reading necessary for a comment on Shakspeare. Those who apply solely to the ancients for this purpose, may with equal wisdom study the *Talmud* for an exposition of *Tristram Shandy*. Nothing but an intimate acquaintance with the writers of the time, who are frequently of no other value, can point out his allusions, and ascertain his phraseology. The reformers of his text are for ever equally positive, and equally wrong. The cant of the age, a provincial expression, an obscure proverb, an obsolete custom, a hint at a person or a fact no longer remembered, hath continually defeated the best of our *guessers*: You must not suppose me to speak at random, when I assure you, that from some forgotten book or other, I can demonstrate this to you in many hundred places: and I almost wish, that I had not been persuaded into a different employment.

Though I have as much of the *natale solum* about me as any man whatsoever; yet, I own, the *primrose path* is still more pleasing than the *Fosse* or the *Watling street*:

> "Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale
> Its infinite variety.——"

And when I am fairly rid of the dust of topographical antiquity, which hath continued much longer about me than I expected; you may very probably be troubled again with the ever fruitful subject of *Shakspeare* and his *Commentators*.

D.

There is a great similarity between the Julius Cæsar o. Shakespear and that of Lord Stirling. Which was written the first? In other words, which of these writers borrowed from the other? This, we fear, cannot be ascertained. We know that the Scottish tragedy was printed in 1607; but when the English one was written is unknown. We cannot fix the date of its performance; nor have any account of its being printed before 1623. The probability is, that Shakespear borrowed from the northern poet.

Of the affinity between these dramas, a few extracts will convince the most careless reader.

ALEXANDER.

Brutus to Cassius.

I weigh thy words with an afflicted heart,
Which for compassion of my country bleeds;
And would to God that I might only smart,
So that all others 'scaped what mischief breeds;
Then never man himself from death did free
With a more quiet or contented mind,
Than I would perish if I both could be,
To Cæsar thankful, to my country kind:
But tho' that great man's grace to me enlarged,
May challenge right in my affection's store,
Yet must the greatest debt be first discharged,
I owe him much, but to my country more.

SHAKESPEAR.

Brut. What you have said
I will consider: what you have to say
I will with patience hear.
Brut. What means this shouting?
I do fear the people chuse Cæsar
For their king.
Cass. Ay, do you fear it?
Then must I think you would not have it so.
Brut. I would not Cassius, yet I love him well.
But wherefore do you hold me here so long?
What is it that you would impart to me?

If it be ought toward the general good
Set honour in one eye and death in the other,
And I will look on both indifferently:
For let the Gods so help me as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death.

On one side or the other there is here a palpable imitation. The speech of Brutus here to the end, is one of the noblest ever penned.

ALEXANDER.

Brutus, continuation of the same speech.

A mind to reign if Cæsar now reveal,
I will in time precipitate his end:
Thus (never armed but for the commonweal),
I help'd a foe, and now must hurt a friend.

SHAKESPEAR, 2d Act, *Brutus solus.*

It must be his death: and for my part,
I know no personal cause, to spurn at him
But for the general: He would be crowned:
* * * * * * * *
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
And kill him in the shell.

ALEXANDER.

Though, *Cæsar*, now I must conspire thy fall,
My heart to thee yet never harboured hate:
But (pardon me), who ever make it thrall,
From bondage Brutus must redeem the state.
Of this my course whatever others judge,
Here I protest it is for good designed,
My thoughts are guilty of no private grudge,
For reason and not fury moves my mind.

SHAKESPEAR.

Brut. O that we could come at *Cæsar*'s spirit
And not dismember Cæsar! But, alas!
Cæsar must bleed for it. And gentle friends
Let 's kill him boldly not wrathfully.

ALEXANDER.

Brutus, Portia.

Brut. How comest thou then thy courage thus to lose
That thou canst look so sad and in my sight?
Lend me, dear love, a portion of the woes;
A burden when divided grows more light.
Portia. Thou hast, dear lord, prevented my design,
Which was to ask of thee what makes thee pale.
If Phœbus had no light, could Phœbe shine?
No, with the cause, of force, effects must faile.
The mirror but gives back as it receives
By just resemblance the objected form,
And what impression the engraver leaves,
The wax receives still to the stamp conforme.
I am the mirror which reflects thy mind,
As forced from thought, or flowing from thine eyes;
I take the state in which thy state I find,
Such is my colour as thy countenance dies.

Brutus excuses himself in a longer speech, longer than the single line in Shakspeare, but to the same evasive effect; and Portia still entreats him, as in Shakspeare, not to conceal the cause of his grief from her.

Portia. Why shouldst thou so from me thy thoughts conceal,
From thine own soul who in thy bosom sleeps?
To whom though shown thou dost them not reveal,
But in thyself more inwardly them keep?
And thou canst harld hide thyself from me
Who soon in thee all alterations spie,
I can comment on all that comes from thee;
True love still looks with a suspitious eye.
Within our bosom rests not every thought
Tuned by a sympathy of mutual love?
Thou mars the music if thou change it ought,
Which when distempered I do quickly prove.
Soul of my soul, unfold what is amiss,
Some great disaster all my thoughts divine,
Whose curiousness may be excused in this
Since it concerns thy state, and therefore mine.

Brutus still evades the question; then

'*Portia.* I was not, *Brutus*, matched with thee to be
'A partner only of thy board and bed:
'Each servile whoore in those might equal me
'Who but for pleasure or for wealth did wed.
'No, Portia spous'd thee minded to remain
Thy fortune's fellow, whether good or ill:
By love's strict bonds whilst mutual duties chain
Two breasts must hold one heart, two souls one will;
Those whom just Hymen voluntarely binds,
They freely should communicate all things,
But chiefly that which most concerns the minds,
Whence either pleasure or displeasure springs.
If thus you seek your sorrows to conceal
Through a disdain or a mistrust of me,
Then to the world what way can I reveal
How great a matter I would do for thee:
And though our sex too talkative be deemed,
As those whose tongues import our greatest powers,
For secrets still bad treasurers esteemed,
Of others greedy prodigal of ours;
Good education may reform defects,
And this may help me to a virtuous life,
Which as a pattern generous worth respects:
'I *Cato's* daughter am and *Brutus'* wife, &c.

SHAKESPEAR.

For the parallel passages in Shakespear, we refer to his *Julius Cæsar.*

ALEXANDER.

'*Cæsar.* No corpulent sanguineans make me fear
'Who with more pain their beards than enemies strike,
'And do themselves like epicureans bear,
'To *Bacchus*, *Mars*, and *Venus* born alike,
'Their hearts do always in their mouths remain,
'As streames whose murmuring shows their course not deep,
'Then still they love to sport, tho' gross and plaine,
'And never dream of ought but when they sleep:
'But those high spirits who hold their bodies down
'Whose visage lean their restless thoughts records:
'Whilst they their cares' depths in their bosoms drown,
'Their silence fears me more than others' words.

SHAKESPEAR.

Julius, Act I.

* *Cæs.* Let me have men about me that are fat,
*Sleek headed men, such as sleep a nights:
*Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look,
*He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.
* *Ant.* Fear him not, *Cæsar*, he is not dangerous;
*He is a noble Roman and well given.
Cæs. *Would he were fatter; but I fear him not.
* Yet if my name were liable to fear
*I do not know the man I should avoid
*So soon as that spare *Cassius*. He reads much,
*He is a great observer; and he looks
*Quite through the deeds of men.

We need not continue the extracts.

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